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THE NEW YORKER

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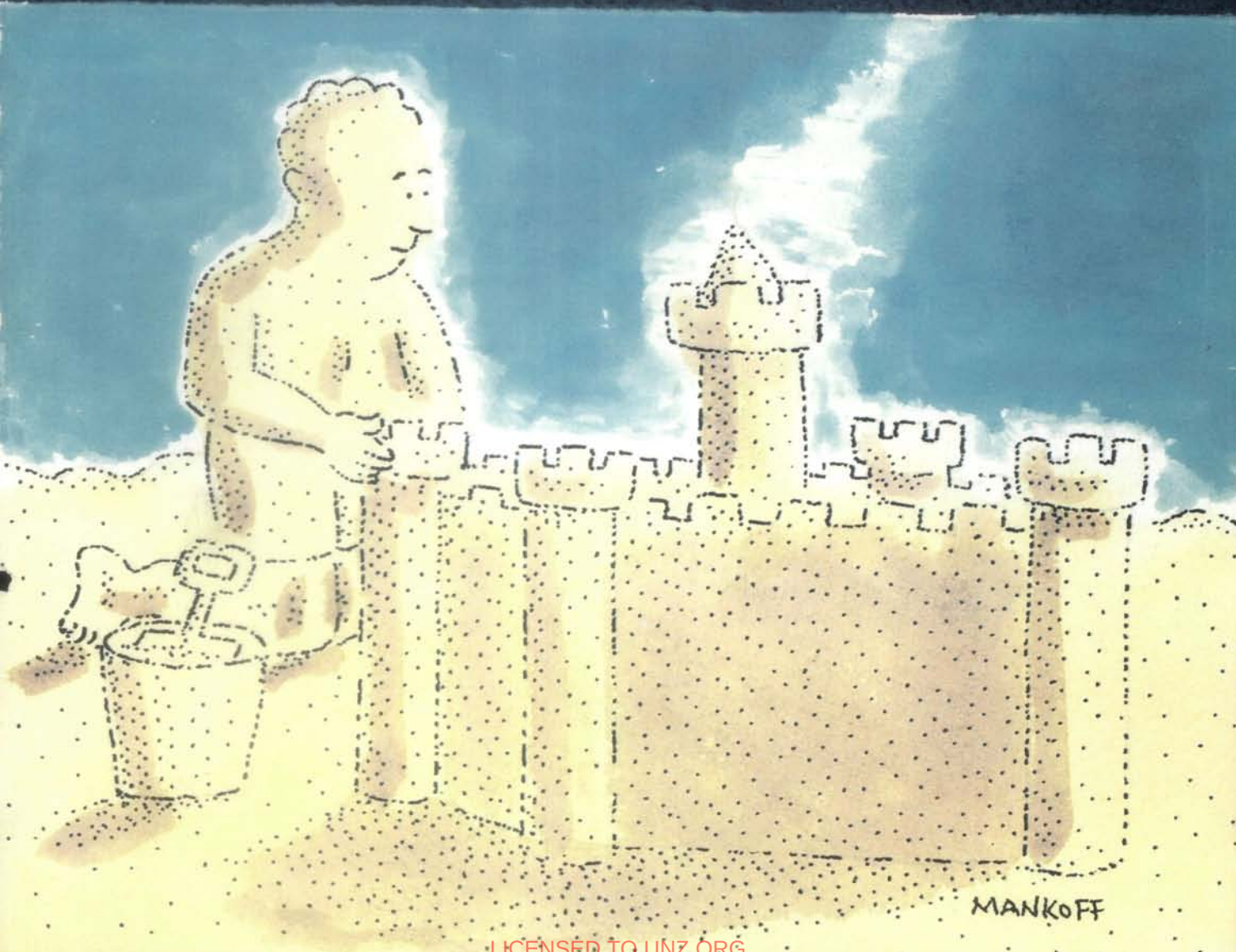

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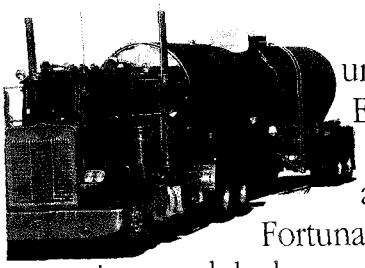

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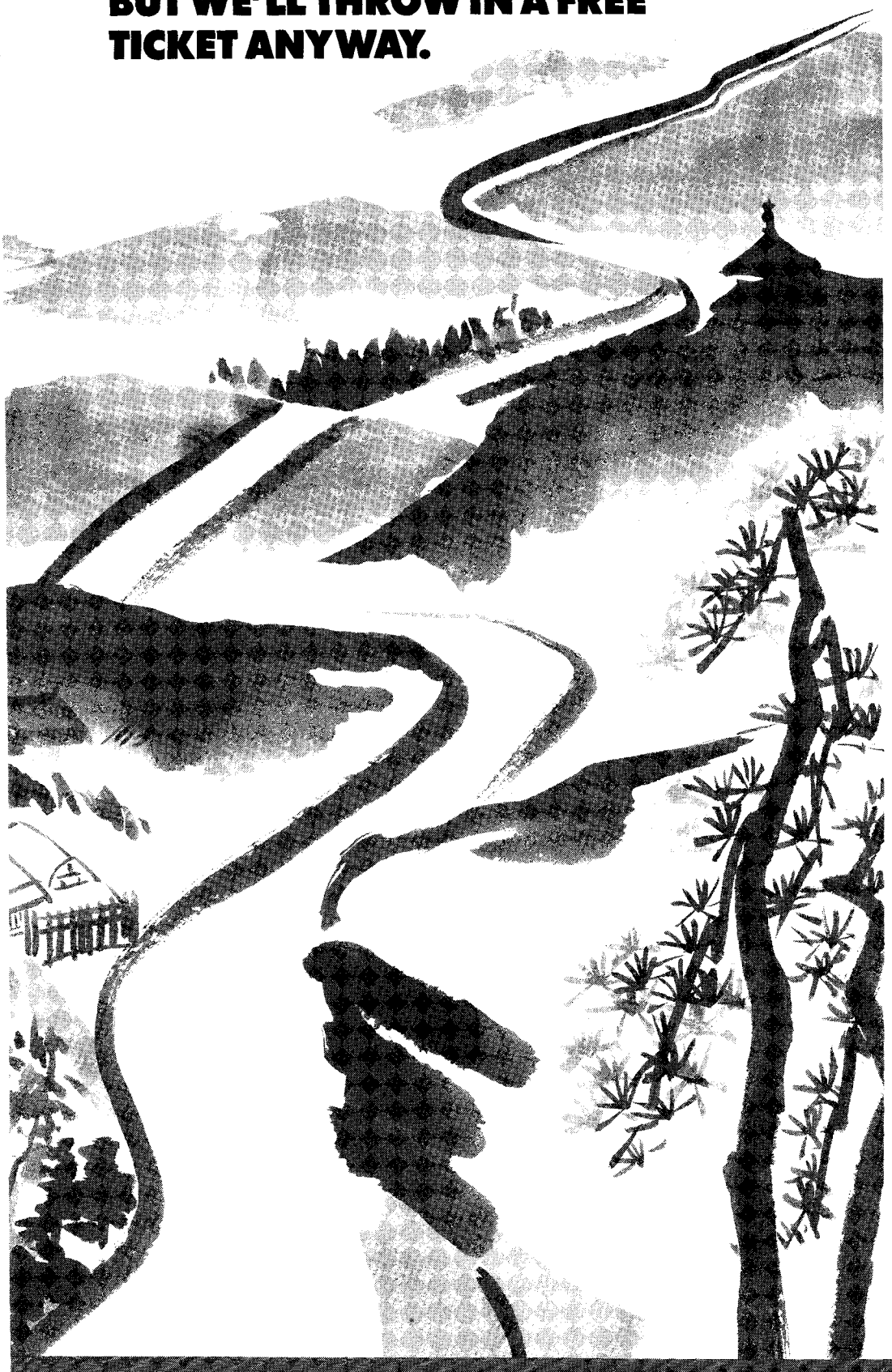

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

ONE of the most frequently heard criticisms of the New York Shakespeare Festival's marathon, now at midpoint, is that it lacks artistic continuity, or at least any discernible artistic cohesiveness. The criticism has sometimes been extended to non-marathon offerings as well. Among the Festival's three outdoor productions this summer, however, there do seem to be common threads: visual ones. For example, in Joe Dowling's "Othello" (the only official marathon entry in the bunch), a sculpted female head lay toppled upon the stage during the third and fourth acts, suggesting the loss of cultural order, while for "The Tempest," the Spanish-language production starting August 27, the Festival promises that a gargantuan pre-Columbian head will grace the Delacorte, symbolizing, at least in theory, memories of a vanished civilization. Another example: in the just-concluded Brazilian "Midsummer Night's Dream" the concerned-for-Nature set consisted almost exclusively of a denuded rain forest, while the "Tempest" staging, from the Venezuelan Compañía Rajatabla, will feature a fossilized palm tree.

Of course, none of this is very unusual, in light of what has been done to Shakespeare's plays over the centuries. Adapters of "The Tempest" have been particularly hard on the Bard. For almost a century, the play existed chiefly in the 1667 Dryden-Davenant version, which gave Miranda and Ferdinand siblings and Ariel and Caliban female companions. The bowdlerization also disregarded most of the text and borrowed prodigally from the Spanish playwright Pedro Calderón. The most unusual version of the play, however, was probably the one performed here in New York, in 1916, to commemorate the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death. Written by the poet Percy MacKaye, the staging had a cast of Follies-like proportions (fifteen hundred actors, singers, and dancers) cavorting in Lewisohn Stadium. Simon-in-the-Park-sized audiences watched Caliban dream of ravishing Miranda and cower at the feet of an Elizabethan Godhead. Quoth the half-human brute to the maid: "Wist where the sea-bull/Flap-flappeth his fin and walloweth there his cow/And snoreth the rainbow from his nostrils." Nature lovers, it appears, have always been drawn to Shakespeare.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

THE JERSEY GIRLS—A play by Larry Manogue. Previews begin Aug. 22. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

THE MATCHMAKER—Dorothy Loudon stars in a revival of the Thornton Wilder comedy. Previews Aug. 20-21. Opens Aug. 22 at 8. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH—Thornton Wilder's play, presented by Jean Cocteau Repertory. Opens Aug. 23 at 8. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

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Kipling Berger, Kimberly Auslander, Suzanne Scott, and William White in "The Jersey Girls"

THE TEMPEST—The season finale of Shakespeare in the Park. Performed, in Spanish, by Venezuela's Compañía Rajatabla. Previews begin Aug. 27. (Delacorte, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about tickets, which are required but free, call 861-7277.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AND THE WORLD GOES 'ROUND: THE SONGS OF KANDER & EBB—A musical revue, with Joel Blum, Bob Cuccioli, Karen Mason, Terry Burrell, and Karen Ziëmba. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

BODY AND SOUL—David Boldt and Randall Denman have the leads in John Glines' gay romantic comedy. Mr. Glines directed. (Courtyard Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 869-3530.)

BREAKING LEGS—The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Vincent Gardenia and Joseph Mascolo play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Victor Argo, Larry Storch, Nicolas Surovy, and, above all, Susan Giosa as the daughter who spins the plot. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/91.) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

DAMON RUNYON'S TALES OF BROADWAY—A show conceived and performed by John Martello. (Double Image, 15 Vandam St. 924-1120.)

GETTING MARRIED—Simon Jones, Scott Wentworth, J. D. Cullum, and Walter Bobbie are the standouts in this spirited production of Shaw's farce about the legal and societal pitfalls of marriage. The play proves surprisingly apt and delightful (though the director, Stephen Porter, seems to have left a first-rate cast entirely to its own devices). New York Shaw doesn't get any better than this. (7/8/91) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 25.)

THE GOOD TIMES ARE KILLING ME—The cartoonist Lynda Barry devised this memory play of words and pop tunes about a racially mixed neighborhood. At the heart of it is the friendship of two little girls, one white, the other black, who are delightfully portrayed by Angela Goethals and Chandra Wilson. The undercurrent of serious comment on race doesn't add much, but every humorous scene scores a bull's-eye. Also with Wendell Pierce and Holly Felton. Mark Brokaw directed. The show was seen this spring at Second Stage. (5/6/91) (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

LIPS TOGETHER, TEETH APART—Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. With Roxanne Hart, Anthony Heald, Nathan Lane, and Deborah Rush; directed by John Tillinger. (7/8/91) (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

LOST IN YONKERS—There's not one glimmer of honesty or authenticity in this family melodrama by Neil Simon. Set in Yonkers during the Second World War, it's about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave h' two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (3/11/91) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.)

MAMBO MOUTH—John Leguizamo portrays seven Hispanic characters in a one-man show. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. Closes Aug. 25.)

MISS SAIGON—Oh, the horror! The horror! (4/29/91) (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

PAGEANT—A musical spoof of beauty contests. Book and lyrics by Bill Russell and Frank Kelly and music by Albert Evans. Conceived and directed by Robert Longbottom. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.)

PENN & TELLER ROT IN HELL—Seen recently on the Great White Way, the dynamic duo are now performing their repertoire of tricks Off Broadway. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.)

RED SCARE ON SUNSET—If you're in the market for a lot of laughs (and a strange catharsis), you couldn't do better than this latest comedy of manners by the actor/writer/farceur Charles Busch—about a Hollywood personality whose paranoid anti-Stalinist fantasies turn out to be true. With this satire on politics, theatre, and sexuality, Busch creates a showcase for his own subtle talents and those of the actress Julie Halston. (8/5/91) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 924-8782.)

A RENDEZVOUS WITH GOD—Avi Hoffman stars in Miriam Hoffman's play, with music, about the Yiddish poet Itsik Manger. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 564-8038. Closes Aug. 25.)

THE SECRET GARDEN—This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (5/13/91) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

SONG OF SINGAPORE—A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings (by John Lee Beatty) and the musical talent (led by the winsome and versatile Donna Murphy) cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. Another problem: on a busy night the seating arrangements here can be extremely cramped. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.)

THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES—The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging, amusing Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (5/13/91) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

LONG RUNS

CATS: Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **CITY OF ANGELS:** Larry Gelbart, dramatist; Cy Coleman, composer; Billy Byers, arranger; and Michael Blakemore, director, are all in top form in this sharp, jokey musical satire about Hollywood in the forties. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running

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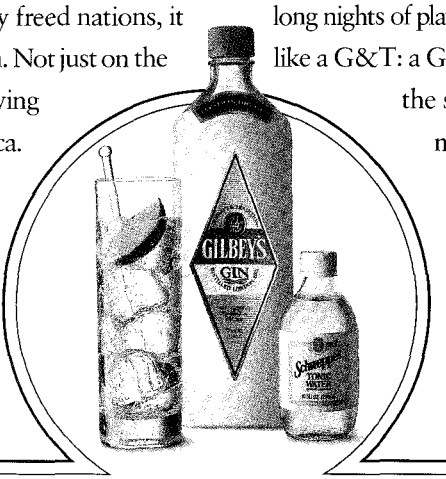

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long run turned thirty-one in May. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.)... **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1991 ½:** This newly revised revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it, and wrote the barbed lyrics. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)... **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)... **GRAND HOTEL:** The dazzling imagination of Tommy Tune's direction and choreography and the dazzling scenery by Tony Walton almost make up for the inner vacancy of this show, but not quite. The story and characters are skimpy and the music is undistinguished. Nevertheless, there isn't a boring moment. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)... **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)... **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)... **ONCE ON THIS ISLAND:** An enchanting musical, set in the Caribbean, by Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)... **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.)... **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)... **SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION:** You're best off knowing nothing about the John Guare play other than that it represents a perfect meeting of the playwright and the director Jerry Zaks. Out of a true story—one apparently about celebrity and Good Samaritanism—Guare has fashioned a wistful comedy about race, class, money, imagination, collective conscience, individual psyche, and the impulse toward art. Kelly Bishop now has the lead. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Pilar Rioja

DANCE

ALTHOUGH we've been watching Spanish dancing for decades, we must confess that what we don't know about it could fill a book. Recently, it has, in fact: a big, remarkable volume from the University of Oklahoma Press. The title is "The Language of Spanish Dance"; the author is the performer, scholar, and educator Matteo Marcellus Vittucci (known publicly as Matteo); and every page contains revelations. To produce this authoritative dictionary, which he has been working on for many years, Matteo interviewed contemporary teachers of dance and ransacked lexicons of Spanish dancing from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Steps are illustrated with detailed drawings based on living dancers and are notated in Laban-notation; frequently, appropriate music for them is given as well. An appendix of basic flamenco rhythms, written in musical notation, and what may well be the most useful bibliography on Spanish dancing ever compiled, round out one of the most valuable dance books of any kind now in print.

As we went through the book, we were struck in particular by two categories of words. One has to do with ways of bringing movement to a sudden stop—terms like *remate, parones, parada, vuelta y figura, cierre,* and, our favorite, *careo del beso,* "a sudden face-to-face passing of dancers so close and with such abandon that they appear to exchange a kiss while moving into each other's place." The second category has to do with the dancer's ability to express (or to dissemble) that inner provocation to perform which we call spirit or soul—words like *castizo, duende, convulsión, contoneo,* and *epiléptico,* the last described as "a term applied scornfully to 'overachieving' flamenco dancers who perform, seemingly endlessly, at top speed with unleashed energy and convulsive movements in response to the encouragement of an undiscriminating audience."

While we're speaking of Spanish dancers: Pilar Rioja will perform her annual summer season of solo works at the Gramercy Arts through September 2.

IN TOWN

PILAR RIOJA—Classical Spanish and flamenco dance. Included on the program are four new works: "Danzas" and "Danza Nueva," based on classical court dance, and "Soleá" and "Tener La Esperanza," which combine modern dance and flamenco. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Aug. 20 and Aug. 22-23, all at 8; Aug. 21 at 2 and 8; and Aug. 24 at 3. The engagement will continue through Sept. 2.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW—Martine van Hamel's New Amsterdam Ballet, Aug. 20-24. Members of the Washington Ballet will join the group for this engagement.... ¶ Pilobolus Dance Theatre, Aug. 27-31. (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

QUITE a while ago, we reported on the Duplex and the strange things known to go on there. Since then, the cabaret has moved across Sheridan Square—it now resides in a wedge-shaped building on the corner of Christopher and Seventh—and we dropped in recently to see what had changed. As far as we could tell, *nothing* had, and that seemed all for the best. Amy Engleberg and Gerry Dieffenbach—a singing waitress and her accompanist, for whom time lurched to a halt circa 1979—were in the midst of a number when we entered the club. Amy was climbing over chairs and trying to swat imaginary flies with a spatula. Occasionally, passersby would stop and peer skeptically through a window, and Amy would signal a patron to fling the door open. At that point, everyone in the place would shout a heavily accented "Eat my yass!"—a slogan Gerry and Amy also work into their songs whenever appropriate—and the door would be slammed shut again.

As the night wore on, we heard a rousing version of the Mamas and the Papas' "Monday, Monday," and of "I Got You Babe" and "Dark Lady," from the Sonny and Cher repertoire. (The Duplex duo is also well-known for "The Steve and Eydie Holiday Medley" and "The Steve and Eydie Gay Pride Medley.") Amy often turned the mike over to regular patrons, one of whom, a woman named Jackie who's apparently into Olivia Newton-John, sang "Hopelessly Devoted to You" and seemed to mean it. Even when Amy was distributing drinks, however, she remained a part of the show. When Gerry interrupted one guest singer's number by hollering, "All-draft delivery!," Amy, without missing a beat, hoisted the four beer mugs she was carrying, began swinging her head back and forth like a German beer moll, and led a fierce round of yodelling.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town.... ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ABILENE CAFÉ, 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (255-7373)—A reincarnated blues bar: the first Abilene led a low-profile life in the East Twenties until 1987; this one opened last year. The club, which is spacious, cheerful, and as plain as a brown paper bag, won't win any prizes for atmosphere, but it has all the ingredients of a good blues bar: cheap grub, a modest cover charge, and a non-trendy crowd.

ARTHUR'S TAVERN, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—A quirky, endearing Village watering hole, perpetually decorated for the holidays—all of them. The musicians work in the back of the room, in a well ringed by a bar—a setup that seems to bring out the latent show-biz tendencies in some of the bar's patrons. Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy, Fridays and Saturdays to Mabel Godwin, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band. Music from nine-thirty.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A tony cabaret attained by passing through an opulent tapas restaurant, where wicker baskets overflow with fruit and vegetables and a row of hams hang over the bar; if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **LYPSINKA**—fresh from a gig in Los Angeles, and played, as always, by John Epperson—will be here as of Aug. 20. The "Fabulous Lypsinka Show" is an evening of lip-synching and dancing that will probably include little-known numbers from Dolores Gray, Gisele Mackenzie, Julie Wilson, and Kaye Ballard, among others. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—An airy, loftlike restaurant-bar, in the gray zone between Zabar's and Columbia. On the menu this week: Freddie Bryant's trio on Aug. 20; Warren Bernhardt's threesome Aug. 21-22; and trombonist **AL GREY'S** sextet Aug. 23-24. Music from nine. Dining.

BITTER END, 147 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—For the price of a drink or two, you can catch a handful of bands here any night of the week. (The cover charge is mostly a formality—

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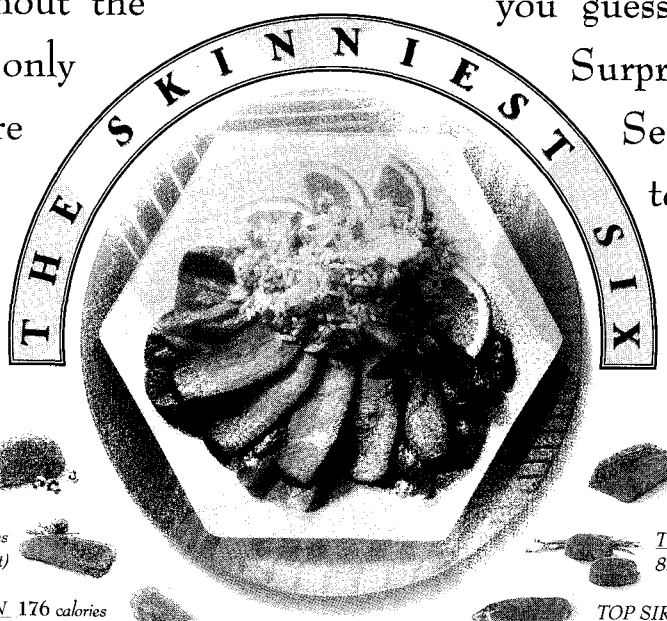
A real Surprise story on beef.

Fire up the skillet and man the steak knives. I've traveled down route 258 to Surprise, Indiana, and what did I find? A major surprise. Never have the facts proved so delicious; never have figures looked so good. Surprise: lean, trimmed beef has no more cholesterol than chicken without the skin. And only 1.5 grams more saturated fat—or about 14 calories.** No wonder those Hoosiers are happy. They've also discovered the Skinniest Six, the leanest cuts of beef. So need I say the magic words "marinated sirloin"? Unwrap the steak, toss the salad and call in the army of friends. People in Indiana are already celebrating with—you guessed it—a Surprise party. See you in the next town. BEEF



ROUND TIP 157 calories
5.9 gms total fat* (2.1 gms sat. fat)

TOP ROUND 153 calories
4.2 gms total fat* (1.4 gms sat. fat)

TOP LOIN 176 calories
8.0 gms total fat* (3.1 gms sat. fat)

EYE OF ROUND 143 calories
4.2 gms total fat* (1.5 gms sat. fat)

TENDERLOIN 179 calories
8.5 gms total fat* (3.2 gms sat. fat)

TOP SIRLOIN 165 calories
6.1 gms total fat* (2.4 gms sat. fat)

Beef.
Real food for real people.

*Source: USDA Handbook 8-13 1990 Rev. Figures are for a cooked and trimmed 3 oz. serving. 4 oz. uncooked yield 3 oz. cooked.
**Here are the respective averages for saturated fat, fat and cholesterol in a 3 oz. serving. Lean beef: 3.2 gms; 8.4 gms; 73 mgs.
Skinniest Six Cuts: 2.3 gms; 6.2 gms; 69 mgs. Skinless chicken: 1.7 gms; 6.3 gms; 76 mgs. ©1991 Beef Industry Council and Beef Board.

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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

walk along Bleecker Street and you're sure to have a free pass handed to you.) In the old days, as a mural behind the bar attests, the club hosted the likes of Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, and Joni Mitchell. Now you're not likely to recognize anyone onstage unless you went to high school with them. Music from eight-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine on Fridays and Saturdays.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Legendary jazz club or tourist trap? Enchanting or infuriating? All of the above, perhaps. As always, some fine and famous musicians will be passing through this ever-hopping room in the coming weeks: the **Billy Cobham** band shares the bill with the **Larry Coryell** duo (with Vic Juris) Aug. 20-25; the **Liz Gorrill/Charles Krachy** duo appears on Aug. 26; and **Dizzy Gillespie** starts up on Aug. 27. First set at nine. Dining.

Tiny Lights at the Knitting Factory

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Next door, there's a bustling, garishly lit market. Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, however, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. Two upcoming trios: **Kirk Lightsey, Marcus Belgrave,** and **Cecil Mc Bee** Aug. 19-24; and **Kenny Barron, Ben Riley,** and **Ray Drummond** beginning on Aug. 26. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—In Bemelmans' Bar, **Kurt Wieting** presides at the piano from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Cat Club, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—Lindy Hop fanatics and other nostalgic dancers hold a party here every Sunday. Other nights, bring your leather and studs. The **Harlem Blues and Jazz Band** holds forth on Aug. 25. Music from eight to midnight.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—Jazz clubs aren't always known for their romantic atmosphere, and Condon's earns higher marks than most. It's a low-ceilinged basement establishment, with lemon walls and abundant candlelight. They rearranged the furniture here a while back, so that now a greater number of people look at the stage rather than at a pole. **Oliver Lake,** a member of the World Saxophone Quartet, leads his own *fivesome* Aug. 20-25. Bassist **Ray Bryant's** *trio* gets under way on Aug. 27. Music after nine.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, posers, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. The motif is prehistoric punk—a Stone Age mural, assorted toy dinosaurs and pterodactyls—and on peak nights there's a take-no-prisoners atmosphere. Shows Sundays through Thursdays at ten, Fridays and Saturdays at eleven.

Dan Lynch, 221 Second Ave., at 14th St. (677-0911)—As uninviting a hole-in-the-wall as you're likely to find, this blues bar is dingy, depressingly lit, and located on a block out of a Gus Van Sant movie. In the world of the blues, however, this spells authenticity, and the bands here are often worth the trouble. Music from ten nightly.

Diva, 306 E. 81st St. (650-1928)—A newly hatched restaurant and piano bar. It's a modest-sized, brick-walled room that offers Italian fare and, Tuesdays through Saturdays, the tuneful musings of pianist **Charles de Forest.** Music from eight-thirty. Closed Sundays.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The cheery white downstairs bar has French windows giving on to the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the real clamor is indoors. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. Upstairs there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

Eagle Tavern, 355 W. 14th St. (924-0275)—In the front room of this Irish pub, not far from the boondocks, barbirds study the TV and grumble about one thing or another. In the back room another crowd listens to Irish folk musicians (on Fridays). On Aug. 23, the tunes are provided by singer Treasa O'Carroll, button accordionist Peadar Keane, guitarist John Dillon, and Jack-of-all-musical-trades Don Meade. Music from nine.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. Saxophonist **Phil Woods** leads a quintet Aug. 20-25, and saxophonist **George Coleman** brings in a quartet for a week starting Aug. 27. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **Les Paul** leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

Flannery's, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—Formerly a dive bar called McCarthy's, this two-floor establishment looks as if it had been dynamited and rebuilt from the ashes up. On the ground floor is a well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features—pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports—and a few of the near-classics: a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis. Downstairs is a low-ceilinged space that looks like a rec room; on weekends (from eleven) and Tuesdays (from nine) it's home to an enlightened mixture of garage-rock, rockabilly, surf-punk, and psychedelic-rock bands.

J's, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—An unpretentious second-floor jazz retreat where a bandleader was once heard saying, "I wanna introduce my drummer first on account of because he has to go put a quarter in the meter." The current lineup includes the composer-singer-pianist **Richard Rodney Bennett** on Aug. 20, the Ted Trimble Trio on Aug. 21, the Virg Dzurinko quartet on Aug. 23, and trumpeter Richie Vitale's quintet on Aug. 24. Music from eight-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Knitting Factory, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—Situated in a neighborhood that boasts the Puck Building to the west and a host of windshield washers to the east, this modest space provides a forum for *free-thinking musicians. Beat and melody* are optional, "music" and "noise" relative terms. **Tiny Lights,** who perform on Aug. 24, play an odd mixture of R. & B. and art music. One minute you'd swear they were disciples of Big Brother & the Holding Company, but then, just when you're headed for the dance floor, they'll break into whale sounds. Other events: Pheeroan Aklaff on Aug. 22; Faith, Women in Love, and PBR Street Gang on Aug. 23. Music after nine.

Marquee, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—At the risk of seeming to dispense free ad copy, it must be said that this black box of a club remains the front-runner on the alternative-music scene. The **Eric Gales Band** comes in on Aug. 21. Gales, who recently released his début album, is a sixteen-year-old rock prodigy already making a name for himself with wild, relentless, Jimi Hendrix-influenced guitar pyrotechnics. Onstage, Gales is a pleasure to watch—he swivels and preens and absolutely tortures his guitar. On the downside, however, there's a frustrating sameness to the band's songs—Eric's older brother and lead singer, Eugene, has a decent, Robert Palmer sort of voice—and one can't help but feel that one's seen it all after a few numbers. **24-7 Spyz,** who will be performing here on Aug. 23, is an equally fierce, mind-boggling rock band whose members hurtle themselves into the crowd; lurch threateningly around the stage; shout unintelligible but obviously unpleasant lyrics; and engage in some lengthy and anarchic Bill-and-Ted-style guitar solos.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—A plain blue back room whose far wall is decorated with round things: a Frisbee, some singles, a drum head, and the woofer from a speaker cabinet, to name a few. The beer of choice is Rolling Rock—by a landslide—and the crowd may make you feel as if you have a midterm to study for, but many of the bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. The **Fleshtones** come in on Aug. 23. The Replacements' lead singer–songwriter, Paul Westerberg, has been saying good things about the **Goo-Goo Dolls,** who'll be here on Aug. 24. That's not surprising, really. The Goo-Goo Dolls come from the same city (Minneapolis) and sound an awful lot like a younger incarnation of the granddaddy cult band that Westerberg heads up. (They favor strained, urgent vocals, rowdy guitars, and good, sound songwriting.) Shows at ten on Thursdays, and at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's more to Michael's Pub than Woody Allen, whose occasional Monday-night Dixieland binges have given the place a little star cachet. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like a good old American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. Pianist **Terry Waldo** is currently leading a show of old-time bordello music, called "Sporting House Revelries." His ensemble includes clarinettist Orange Kellin, trumpeter Bill Dillard, and vocalist Frozine Thomas. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A great, pricey cabaret in the sky. A tribute to Cole Porter is currently in swing. The performers—vocalists **Mary Cleere Haran, Terri Klausner,** and **Helen Schneider,** and pianist-vocalists **Bruce W. Coyle** and **Ronny Whyte**—offer plenty of familiar numbers, but those who come expecting to hear a hit parade might be disappointed. What they will find is a number of Porter curiosities. Not all the material was worth exhuming, but the revue offers some strong performances and a fresh perspective on the composer, whose centennial is being widely celebrated this year. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to Howie Wyeth's ragtime trio, Tuesdays to **Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks,** Fridays to Sam Ulano and his Dixielanders, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers. Show times vary.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. **Abdullah Ibrahim** and **Ekaya** will be here through Aug. 25; the **Nat Adderley** quintet appears on Aug. 27. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter Miles Evans is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—A big, boisterous, Mardi Gras kind of place. Lately the emphasis at the club, which used to be a little Irish bar off Union Square, has been shifting from blues and rock to zydeco. **Terrance Simien and the Mallet Playboys,** a young bayou-country group, will be here on Aug. 23. Music from eight on weeknights, and from eight-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. (475-5120)—A three-floor extravaganza. At the Top of the Gate, Brazilian vocalist **Tania Maria** is in action Aug. 20-25. Conga ace and bandleader **Ray Barretto** begins work on Aug. 27. Music from nine-thirty.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who opened this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." The **Joe Lovano** quintet is here through Aug. 25; the **Mary Osborne** trio appears as of Aug. 27. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays. Music after nine-thirty.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. **Widespread Panic,** a

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hard-rocking Athens, Georgia, export that recently made its big-label début, performs on Aug. 24. Shows from ten.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. A trio consisting of **RONNIE MATHEWS, JOE SANTIAGO,** and **ALEX DIAZ** perform Aug. 22-24; **RUFUS REID** and **KENNY WERNER** begin work on Aug. 26. Music from eight. Closed Sundays.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

NO matter how much "Miss Saigon" and "The Will Rogers Follies" carry on about the racial and ethnic balance of their casts, they're still no match for the crunchiest cross-cultural bridge mix appearing nightly on Broadway. No need for a ticket broker. Admission's free. Just be on 46th Street, east of Eighth Avenue, sometime between 10:30 and 11 P.M.

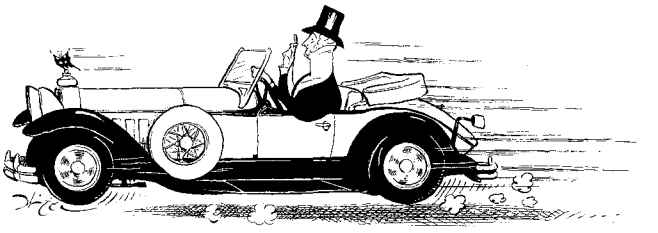
Hookers and callboys starting the late shift in Lycra and leopard-spotted loungewear sashay seismically in from the west. As if out of the Imperial Theater's back door, on the south side of the street, come half of the curly-haired blond guests from the Marriott Marquis and the Milford Plaza, armed with idiot-proof cameras and programs from "Les Misérables." From the east wends a unique amalgam: patrons of the jazz club Indigo Blues weaving warily among Dianetically correct Scientologists—fresh from their offices down the block—discussing L. Ron Hubbard's newest work. (Hubbard has written more best-sellers from the grave than most authors have from their studies.)

But it's the north side that's force-feeding this thoroughfare its biggest dose of urbane glamour since Bob Fosse's "Chicago" played across the street. The roses growing out of the granite walls, the Dean & Deluca blondies, the Andy-Hardy-goes-to-the-big-city-and-learns-to-use-gel staff, and the smashing Caligarian lobby staircase make the Paramount Hotel an immediate scene-stealer. This savvily refurbished flophouse has finally opened its long-awaited bar, The Whiskey; yet as dimly sleek and seductively angular as its Philippe Starck/David Rockwell interior is, it's the bar's clientele that's been drawing gawkers. A larger contingent of expertly slashed sleeveless shirts, massively right Alain Mikli glasses, Aveda-conditioned hair, and tastefully weathered Cole-Haan shoes has yet to find its way to midtown. The scene is somewhere between slumming at the Royalton and Peggy Sue's on its best behavior. "You had to see him, talking about how he had Kelly hold the Escape bottle to determine its perfect shape. Though he did look great." "Here, take this. I don't want my trainer to see me drinking a madras." "I never go to the theatre—what's good?" Who talks like this around here? A family of "Les Miz" watchers sheepishly braved their way in and sat awkwardly on the high-backed rose chairs. "They don't have seats like this at the Marriott," Mom told the waitress. Then she asked her husband, "It's like SoHo, isn't it?" The Whiskey is going to save a lot of bucks on bus tours.

ART

IN New York as we remember it from about the time Charles Follen McKim's Pennsylvania Station was demolished, in 1963, small children tended to have a lot of ersatz McKim, Mead & White buildings pointed out to them. Almost anything that had a cornerstone and looked very grand and vaguely Palladian could maybe, just maybe, be attributed to that illustrious firm. In this matter, our teachers, too, were often mistaken. Or it may have been that they were experiencing a kind of displaced grief—the old Metropolitan Opera House was among the temples that fell about then—and were suffering from quixotic delusions that took the form not of windmills but of edifices by our city's once and most mythic architectural team. The New-York Historical Society's show (through September 1) of turn-of-the-century drawings, prints, and photographs of structures by McKim, Mead & White should help to set the record straight. It might also make you want to bawl.

The deliberate destruction of distinguished buildings, even of relatively new ones, is hardly a recent phenomenon in this town. The New York Herald Building, for instance, an appropriately garrulous entity that used to stand at Broadway and 35th, was designed, by Stanford White, in 1892, completed in 1895, and demolished less than thirty years later, in 1921. The life span of the Madison Square Presbyterian Church was even shorter: Born 1906, Died 1919—a good six years before the first Madison Square Garden bit the dust. Saddest of all, perhaps, was the fate of the Knickerbocker Trust Company Building, formerly at 358 Fifth: constructed, the label says, between 1902 and 1904, and demolished "c. 1910-1925." That's a pretty broad circa. Didn't anybody notice when it came down?



The only moral of this exhibition is that we probably ought to make a big point of loving the McKim, Mead & White creations that we've still got. These do include the Brooklyn Museum; the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Morgan Library; Columbia University's Low Library and most of its central quad; what is now the Bronx Community College campus; the Metropolitan, University, Century, and Colony clubs; the Bowery Savings Bank, at the corner of Bowery and Grand; the better parts of Bellevue Hospital; the buildings at 680 Park, 972 Fifth, and 7-11 East 73rd Street; and the Washington Square arch, which is currently, we're relieved to note, being restored.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Walter Annenberg, who made a name for himself as the publisher of *TV Guide*, turned down a billion-dollar offer for his modern-art collection and chose instead the nobler path of philanthropy by bequeathing it to this museum several months ago. The gift of the collection, which had been perhaps the finest grouping of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings still in private hands, sets a standard of excellence for future patrons of the arts. The exhibition begins with some exquisite small works by Fantin-Latour, followed by two rooms, devoted to Monet, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Cézanne, that would be the pride of any museum. These rooms include some of the collection's finest works, such as Monet's "Poppy Field, Argenteuil" (1875), Gauguin's "The Siesta" (1892-94), and Cézanne's "The House with the Cracked Walls" (1892-94), all of which were purchased by Annenberg in 1983 from his sister Enid Haupt. Farther on are some very good early-twentieth-century works, including Picasso's haunting "At the Lapin Agile" (1905), an important but somewhat overwrought Vuillard, a beautiful Matisse, and a very pretty Bonnard; these works, however, are not up to the same level as the great Impressionist ones. Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ A hundred and fifty sculptures, drawings, and decorative objects by Paul Manship (1885-1966). Through Sept. 1. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's roof garden, planted with nine sculptures by Rodin, is open when the weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Nudes," a show of fifty photographs by Lee Friedlander taken over the past twelve years. Through Oct. 8. . . . ¶ In the "Projects" space is a very affecting video installation by the French film theorist and video artist Thierry Kuntzel, titled "Winter (The Death of Robert Walser)." The work, a triptych consisting of three video "panels" projected on the wall, reunites the medium with the fine-art tradition, from which it has become increasingly estranged. In the central panel, the camera pans four times very slowly back and forth above the body of a naked man. At first, the man is covered with a veil of softly folded fabric, which rises and falls with his breathing. In the second shot, the fabric becomes sheerer, the man more visible. In the third, it seems as if he has stopped breathing. In the fourth, the veil is gone. Finally, this image disintegrates into what looks like a field of video snow, and then the cycle begins again. The man, who is black, is depicted with a clinical sensuousness, like a hybrid of Christ in Grünewald's "Isenheim Altarpiece" and the carved marble of Michelangelo and Bernini. As the cycle progresses, the flanking panels fade slowly from a deep television cobalt blue to an infinite video white. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ Ad Reinhardt's single-color abstractions from the late fifties and sixties are often considered to be the Nordic lodestars of minimalism. With this retrospective, MOMA, for one, has certainly built a powerful case for such a judgment, and, in its inimitable way, has tried to bring the gavel down on that view as well. It is a very intense and occasionally eerie exhibition. Its concluding sequence, for instance, is a bright room filled with twenty of the artist's black-on-black paintings, arranged in a rhythmically stentorian fashion in which luminous nuances—Reinhardt's infinitesimal gradations of tone and his latent imagery, most notably the nearly ubiquitous cruciforms—have been all but obliterated. The impact is terrifically jolting, like a door slammed shut or a gunshot fired in the concluding scene of a play. But in a strange way it is also anticlimactic. Before getting to this last, black room, viewers have slid through a sort of Wonderland rabbit chute of rooms in which colors first appear in natural abundance, then are gradually distilled, and finally are apotheosized into firmaments of

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

blue, then red. In terms of pure, retinal drama, the high point of the show occurs during the transition from earth to Heaven, as it were, in a room given to half-tones and seemingly disembodied clarion notes against taupe, mauve, and puce-colored grounds, and in the segue from this room into one that is very suddenly, very astrally blue. It is a breathtaking moment, both disorienting and exhilarating. Visually, if not polemically, the hot spot of the show is right there. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ A small show of posters, catalogues, ads, and magazine covers by the Swiss graphic designer Herbert Matter (1907-84). . . . NOTE: The museum's sculpture garden, at 14 W. 54th St., is open, free, on Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 10, with musicians from the Juilliard School performing at 7:30. This summer's program is dedicated to the music of Erik Satie. (The museum is open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

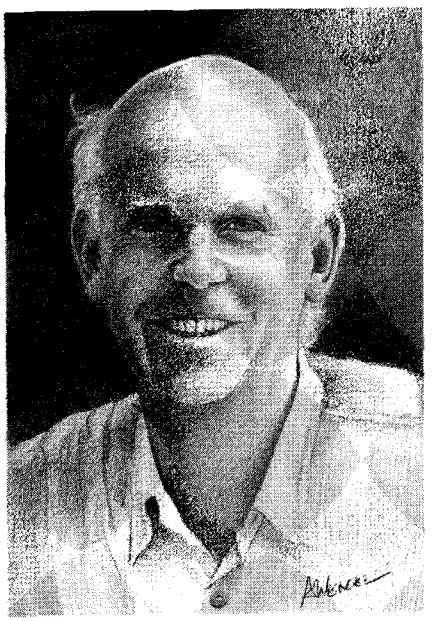
GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until early 1992.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Over the past decade it became a near-cliché to invoke John Baldessari's influence as a teacher. As if to assault paradox—and, perhaps, ironically to embrace Baldessari's pedagogical reputation—this retrospective has been organized into eight loosely chronological, didactically labelled rooms, each of which is further equipped with its own printed, loose-leaf, lesson-cum-exam-question page. In Room 1, for example, we pluck a page with the heading "Lessons on Art and Art Making" and, looking at the wall, find "Wrong," a 1967 word-and-image painting that consists of a silk-screened picture of a man standing in front of a tree on a suburban street. "'Wrong,'" we read, "breaks the rule that one should never take a picture of someone in front of a tree because it will look as if the tree were growing out of the person's head." It's interesting how much Baldessari eventually picked up from his ex-students and others. If the lessons of the first two rooms provide virtual blueprints for the likes of David Salle, Richard Prince, and Jenny Holzer, the last rooms declare that important teachers never stop learning. Tips from Salle, in particular, are quite obvious by the close of this show, but—more unexpectedly—so are the effects, it seems, of shaped canvases by the abstract painter Elizabeth Murray. Through Oct. 20. . . . ¶ "American Life in American Art" presents nearly a hundred and seventy twentieth-century paintings and sculptures from the museum's permanent collection. . . . ¶ The long-neglected decorative artist Hunt Diederich (1884-1953)—a contemporary of Elie Nadelman, whose work Diederich's faintly suggests—was born in Hungary, the son of a Prussian cavalry officer and a proper-Bostonian artist. After some schooling in Switzerland, he came to the States to live with his maternal grandfather, the painter William Morris Hunt; then he went out West to become a cowboy. His *animalier* sculptures, cowboyish and not, were a hit in Paris at the 1913 Salon d'Automne, where "Greyhounds" was bought by a Baron Rothschild. This high-pitched curriculum vitae—amplified by sojourns in Fascist Germany, and a crippling injury caused by a fall from scaffolding—seems to have affected his thinking. In 1947, he sent out anti-Semitic material by mail in envelopes marked "with compliments from Members of the National Institute of Arts and Letters." He was expelled from the institute, and died not long after, while working on a bas-relief for the A.S.P.C.A. headquarters in Manhattan. Diederich's art is fanciful and filigreed: wrought-iron fire screens, trivets, and candlesticks, for instance, with fox and ibex motifs. Bravo to the Whitney for this rediscovery. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM DOWNTOWN, 33 Maiden Lane—"Constructing American Identity." This exhibition, organized by fellows in the Whitney Museum's Independent Study Program, attempts to explore the unspoken political agendas of art exhibitions by recalling three historic shows of American contemporary art:

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

one from the 1939 World's Fair, which embraced democratic values by combining social-realist and abstract painting; a travelling exhibition of the Abstract Expressionists, from 1958-59, which portrayed America's boundless individualism during the Cold War; and a show of Pop art from the 1964 World's Fair, which communicated consumer affluence and the merger of culture with the marketplace. The current show does not attempt to re-create the exhibitions, but instead includes works from the Whitney's collection by artists who were represented in these shows, along with lengthy wall texts, fascinating period quotes by the artists and their



Claes Oldenburg at Seagram Plaza

critics, and occasional magazine articles and advertisements. The written material ranges from several articulate quotes from Robert Motherwell about the antibourgeois spirit of artists leading bourgeois lives—a paradox that has come to be seen as the Catch-22 of late modernism—to an ad for the Leo Castelli gallery that shows a map of Europe being conquered by the gallery's artists. The ad celebrates cultural imperialism with all the bright-eyed optimism that characterized America's Valhallan early sixties. The exhibition is a bit of a curatorial disaster, and it's further dampened by minor paintings and prints, particularly in the case of Pop art. But as an illustrated essay this display brings some current art-historical thinking to an audience that might never read an article on the subject. Through Aug. 30. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 6.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—Although the museum now has to close whole floors at certain times of the day because of a two-million-dollar cut in city support, you can always see Chris Burden's "Medusa's Head," which is the most recent in an excellent series of lobby installations by contemporary artists. Burden's fourteen-foot suspended Medusa, which has yet to turn a single mortal to stone, is overrun with creepy, crawling railroad tracks instead of snakes. There are hundreds of them working their way in and out of a purgatorial rutted-rock landscape meant to resemble an asteroid, transporting rock to who knows where. Trains, which usually are symbols of industrialization, Western expansion, and progress, are depicted here as mechanical, postindustrial chain gangs. This is a very strong work. Through Sept. 2. . . . ¶ "Quattrocento," a small exhibition of a few dozen early-Renaissance panel paintings from Italy, shows off another of the many fine corners of the Brooklyn Museum's vast collection. The works are all small and most of them are minor, but they cogently present the history of the quattrocento, giving a sense of its rich spread throughout northern Italy. The show begins with a charming trecento "Last Supper," attributed to Vitale de Bologne, that exhibits archaic perspective, and a marvellous triptych by Maso di Banco, one of Giotto's most gifted pupils, that in one panel depicts an elongated Christ on a blood-spattered Cross. Flemish influence is evident in a tender portrait of St. Jerome by Donato dei Bardi, and the voluminous lit-velvet drapery of Venice is represented by a depiction of St. James Major by Carlo Crivelli. A curiously stormy world view is presented by the Marchigian Lorenzo d'Alessandro da San Severino, and a mysterious sense of time standing still haunts a little "Venus and Mars" attributed to Palma Vecchio. That work, dated circa 1515, is the latest in the show. (Open Wednesdays, except Aug. 28, through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"The Way to Independence," a show of more than five hundred artifacts dealing with the upheaval endured by three generations of Hidatsa Indians and their eventual relocation to a reservation called Independence. Through Nov. 3. . . . ¶ Thirty-five large-format color photographs of endangered North American fish, including lampreys, shiners, and trout. Through Sept. 22. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

AMERICAN CRAFT MUSEUM, 40 W. 53rd St.—"Frank Lloyd Wright: Preserving an Architectural Heritage" is a show of more than seventy pieces of furniture, art-glass windows, lights, and other decorative pieces spanning sixty years of the artist's career. Through Oct. 27. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday and Friday evenings until 8.)

ASIA SOCIETY, Park Ave. at 70th St.—"The Here and the Hereafter: Images of Paradise in Islamic Art" includes fifty-one examples of painting, calligraphy, stone carving, and architecture from Islamic cultures from Spain to Indonesia. Through Sept. 8. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

COOPER-HEWITT MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Since its founding, in 1897, by the three Hewitt sisters, whose goal was to elevate taste in America, the Cooper-Hewitt has accumulated a marvellous, if rarely displayed, library of the decorative arts. "A Design Resource" is a rotating sampler of nearly a thousand objects drawn from the collection: old tarot cards, tapestry fragments from a few millennia ago, architectural drawings, gilt furniture mounts (including a representation of a tiny pair of human feet), locks, eighteenth-century button samples, lace, chairs of every date and style, ornately beaded boxes, and Viennese tableware. The installation, while a little deconstructively tricky upstairs, flows quite well, and many of the contrasts are entertaining. How can you not love an exhibition that juxtaposes a nineteenth-century birdcage in the shape of a chapel, an Egyptian funerary boat from the Middle Kingdom, and ornate copper food molds? (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Painting a Place in America: Jewish Artists in New York, 1900-45." Jewish painters and sculptors have certainly made contributions to the history of twentieth-century American art, but this is a weak idea for an exhibition, and no great historical insight is gained by the segregation. What the viewer is left with is primarily an impression of second-rate, labored art—the essentially boring heaviness of urban social realism, as typified by the Soyer brothers and provincial abstraction. But there are some delightful discoveries in the show, including a witty, Cubistic 1915 portrait of Marsden Hartley by Ben Benn, and a mythical, Old World circus scene by Benjamin Kopman, with shades of Chagall,

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Ensor, and Marc. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 3.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"Paint, Powder, and Leaf" showcases nearly a hundred decorated objects, from tin coffeepots and cannisters to wood chests and iron fire screens. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ A show of twenty-four quilts with floral themes, all prize-winners from this spring's Great American Quilt Festival. Through Sept. 15. . . . ¶ Forty-five narrative paintings by Harry Lieberman (1880-1983). Through Sept. 22. (Open daily, 9 to 9.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—In the exhibition "Illustrating Nature: The Art of Botany," the New York Botanical Garden's collection is represented by ninety-five watercolors, pen-and-ink drawings, books, and dried plant specimens. Through Sept. 29. (Open Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—A show of sixty drawings, photographs, and prints of New York structures built at the turn of the century by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White. Through Sept. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Kingdoms of Land, Sea, and Sky" includes a hundred and eighty zoological woodcuts, engravings, and watercolors by artists and naturalists such as Albrecht Dürer, John James Audubon, Edward Lear, and Maria Sibylla Merian. Through Aug. 24. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.). . . ¶ "Documents of Dissent," a show of books, posters, handbills, and journals from China, Tibet, the Soviet Union, the United States, and other countries. Included are the first English translation of "The Gulag Archipelago," the "Black Book of Polish Censorship," and posters by the collaborative group Guerrilla Girls. (Edna Barnes Salomon Room.). . . ¶ A display of recently acquired rare books and manuscripts, including Joseph Conrad's manuscript for "The Secret Sharer" and Washington Irving's for "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Through Oct. 12. (Berg Collection.) (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, 32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Road, Long Island City—Noguchi (1904-88), one of the twentieth century's singular talents, designed this oasis for more than two hundred and fifty of his sculptures. It contains a wide range of his work—from the early surrealistic biomorphic sculptures to several types of stone carvings—and documentation of his prodigious public art. The centerpiece of the museum is a peaceful, ivy-walled garden dotted with the artist's works. (Open Wednesdays and Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"Imágenes Líricas: New Spanish Visions." An astonishingly rich and ambitious art world has sprung up in post-Franco Spain, with seven brand-new museums devoted, at least in part, to living artists; a spirited major international art fair; an impressive array of exhibitions and collections; and a network of dozens of thriving, serious art galleries. This exhibition presents eight artists who the curators believe are the most interesting to have emerged in this newly opened environment. However, the works, which do not conform to any one trend, suffer by and large from an academic cosmopolitanism, even as they express unique qualities of Catalan, Moorish, or Spanish culture. José María Sicilia, the most widely noted of the batch, is a gifted painter who seeks to represent the fleeting and the abstract, but all too often his works seem programmatic. Juan Uslé is perhaps even more gifted with a brush, but his quest for self-expression, like that of the more lyrical Juan Carlos Savater, who plays Dove to Uslé's Ryder, is without issues or viewpoint. Perejaume is the most playful artist here. His neo-conceptual collages of paint and postcards play with image and abstraction, reproduction and art, in entertaining, if somewhat familiar, ways. And his postcard rack, which is filled with mirrors instead of vacation memories, examines issues of landscape, place, and representation crisply and intelligently. Through Sept. 8. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

GALLERIES

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

"Africa Explores: Twentieth-Century African Art"—The great African sculpture that modernist artists and European collectors valued and that shaped our idea of African art is relegated in this show to the final room, where it serves as a startling epitaph for traditions that no longer exist. The exhibition is an attempt to reverse the commonly held belief that contemporary African art is in the doldrums. Although only some of the work is successful, the show is always provocative and often entertaining. The material is organized into five categories—"traditional," "new functional," "urban," "international," and "extinct"—which are used to distinguish, for example, paintings made as "signs" from those made as "art." Perhaps the most inventive works are the Pop coffins of Ghana's Kane Kwei. One, made to transport a taxi-fleet owner to his final resting place, is in the form of a Mercedes-Benz; another resembles an onion. There are lively comparisons here, such as that between Magdalene Odundo's elegant, very modernistic long-necked ceramic vessels and traditional ritualistic statues whose quirky figuration seems somehow related. Painting, a relatively new form for the continent, seems to have reached its most inventive level in Zaire, with the naïve pictographs of Albert Lubaki and the charming political narratives of the self-taught Chéri Samba (including his hilarious "Battle with the Mosquitos"). Through Dec. 29. (Center for African Art, 54 E. 68th St. Open daily, except Mondays; opens Sundays at noon.)

"When Objects Dream and Talk in Their Sleep"—Since Janine Cirincione became its director, the Jack Tilton gallery has become one of the pithiest group-show venues in town. It has introduced New Yorkers to the mock-mingy joys of the new Belgian conceptualism, as practiced by artists such as Guillaume Bijl, Wim Delvoye, and Leo Copers, while also helping to settle the generational debt to the late Belgian bibliophile and bon vivant Marcel Broodthaers. Broodthaers' influence today probably rivals that of the other chess-playing Marcel—the acid Duchamp—for he seems to have left his systematically deadpan, loopy, lyrical mark on a spectrum of artists, ranging from the British filmmaker Peter Greenaway to such arch-American acerbs as Richard Prince and the neophytes Nayland Blake, Jessica Diamond, and Fred Wilson. The title of this show was taken from an essay by the Surrealist Tristan Tzara, and most of the objects and installations lounging around the gallery have the poetic-prosaic, straight-from-the-attic-of-the-mind lilt that conjures Broodthaers. Karen Kilimnik's "Castle Gloom," for instance, is a scatter piece that suggests the ruins of a romance novel set in Scotland, told, seemingly, from the point of view of a latter-day, sixteen-year-old suburban Brontë, and Paula Hayes' "Cool Bride or Bruce Lee Is Dead" suggests a more explosive, though no less neurotic, form of retro-Popism. Maureen Connor's piece, however, did not make us think of Broodthaers. Her "Ensemble for Three Female Voices," set in a curtained-off space, consists of three "impaled" larynxes cast in red lipstick. We hear three recorded voices: one seems to murmur, while another laughs and the third weeps. It's a Duchampian mean-machine. Through Aug. 23. (24 W. 57th St.)

"Letters"—Letters have been used in literature for those poignant, vulnerable moments when a character reveals his or her deepest feelings. But in real life, letters can be used against the writer to a variety of ends, from naughty fun to outright sadism. All the works here—most of which are irreverent—incorporate letters. In a collage consisting of a number of Connie Chung's letters and autographed photos, Jeffrey Vallance has a good time with his subject, tracing her rise from local newscaster to national celebrity through her thank-you notes and the evolution of her hairdos. In a handwritten letter that may be real or a total fabrication, Sean Landers tells a Zurich art dealer how desperately he needs money the dealer owes him from the sale of art works. The artist threatens to display the letter publicly—a threat he here carries out—until payment is

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WAYSIDER

Around the turn of the century, years before the suburbs were bound together by their present knots of asphalt, the Long Island Motor Parkway, the world's first high-speed, limited-access thoroughfare, was born. Built by the millionaire William Kissam Vanderbilt, the parkway was used primarily for auto racing (and was later scrutinized by Nazi engineers when Hitler was building the Autobahn), but it was also open to anyone willing to fork over a toll at one of the dozen lodges that lined its tortuous route, which stretched from Alley Pond Park to Lake Ronkonkoma. Not long before the Second World War, the state took over the parkway. The one toll lodge that has survived substantially intact has been transported from its original location in Garden City to a parking field in the town's business district, where it is now being refurbished to house both a Parkway museum and the town's Chamber of Commerce.

Designed by John Russell Pope, the lodge looks quaint enough to have been owned by some rustic who made it his home among the hedgerows. Two stories high and about twenty-two feet square, it resembles a Norman cottage: it has a brick-and-stucco construction, a wood-tiled roof, dormers, and forest-green shutters. From one side juts a massive porte cochere, under which cars once passed as drivers paid for the privilege of traversing Mr. Vanderbilt's brainchild. Although any number of new touches are being ruthlessly tacked on (a well-equipped kitchen, a steel door around back), other details have been scrupulously preserved—such as the copper rain gutters and the original iron shutter hooks, which look like tiny propellers jutting out from the walls. If the lodge were able to achieve consciousness, it would probably appreciate its immediate surroundings: it now nestles within sight of a new generation of motorists, who gather at the Triple-A just across the street.

made. Ernst Caramelle is represented by a monumentally sadistic but evidently fictional letter in which he provides lurid details of the sexual fun he is having with the wife and daughter of the letter's recipient. The one work that fails to raise a chuckle is the one in which privacy is indisputably violated, where fiction gives way to fact. The work is credited to Larry Clark and consists of a series of letters and photos sent to the artist by a former prisonmate over a period of five years. The writer hopes the artist will help him get back on his feet, but the letters go unanswered. Instead, they wind up in an exhibition. Through Aug. 30. (Burgin, 130 Prince St. Closed Mondays.)

OTHER VENUES

Claes Oldenburg—"Monument to the Last Horse," the artist's latest large-scale sculpture, is an aluminum-and-foam horseshoe with bent nail. The piece will permanently reside in Marfa, Texas, beginning this autumn. Through Aug. 24. (Seagram Building Plaza, 375 Park Ave., at 52nd St.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

IT would be a shame to miss the show that's been at Houk Friedman all summer (Madison Avenue at 82nd Street; through September 20). Full of wonderful photographs, more than half of them from the twenties and thirties, the exhibition is a mixture of works by both well-known and more obscure photographers. There's a sophisticated level of connoisseurship on display in the choices that have been made here, and there's no theme to the exhibition at all; this is a show that's all about the pleasure of looking at pictures and the satisfaction one can get from the experience—there's always something to learn, always something to see, if the photographers are of the quality of the ones here. We were particularly struck by a grouping of four pictures by Brassaï. Each one depicts a different subject, and together they underline what made Brassaï's work so memorable—he was an artist who could capture the night. There's a nighttime photo of a wall at La Santé prison, a desolate, empty image in which shadows of trees climb that wall; and another nighttime shot, of deserted streets, that is so right in mood that you can almost fear the sound of footsteps. In this photograph, which is titled "Avenue de L'Observatoire dans le Brouillard," the spots of light from streetlamps and from the headlights of a car are the equivalent of Hitchcock's angles in their suggestion of mood. The other two photographs catch another side of the night, one that Brassaï had such a feeling for that he has come to be identified with it: the life of bars and dance halls. Here we see a photograph taken backstage at the Folies Bergères, which shows us what glamour looks like when the pose is off. The fourth image is of women at a bar, Le Monocle, some of them in drag, their hair slicked back, at home in their hangout, letting Brassaï preserve their underworld.

John Sexton / Sebastião Salgado—Many of the photographs here are so derivative that while they aren't really copies, they feel eerily as if they were. Most of all, Sexton's work is reminiscent of the photography of Ansel Adams, who inspired, taught, and employed him. Adams' influence is a well-known aspect of Sexton's work, and it screams out as a subject of this show. Here we see photography echoing photography, not as part of the Duchampian tradition but as a continuation of a tradition. How odd that something so obedient seems, in a way, so radical, so egoless. / Forty black-and-white photographs of the oil fires in Kuwait and the firefighters working to extinguish them. Both shows through Sept. 1. (International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

Photography at the Met—A personal and engaging summer exhibition from the permanent collection. All five of the photographers represented work in very different ways: Andrew Bush captures someone driving in a car, isolated and deep in a private world, while René Sultra uses the metaphor of a brick wall to create a visualization of his own father's death. Larry Sultan also delves into his family (and its dynamics), with his stills of old home movies and recent portraits of his parents. Philip-Lorca diCorcia's photos are strong in their suggestion of loneliness and alienation. And from Sally Mann there are gracefully complex photographs of kids hanging around. These five visions make for a show rich in both narrative implications and textures of feeling. Through Sept. 8. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Short List—**Lee Friedlander**, Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursdays until 9, through Oct. 8); **Wayne Geist** and **Orah Moore**, Step, 66 Crosby St. (opens at 1, through Aug. 29); **Nic Nicosia** and **Bettina Rheims**, Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through Aug. 30); **Nina Howell Starr** and **Michael von Graffenried**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through Aug. 23).

MUSIC

A FRIEND who is visiting Pesaro writes:

Besides the churches and the Adriatic, what impresses me most about Italy is the extent to which music still seems to matter in daily life. The big musical event here is the annual festival devoted to "il cigno di Pesaro," Rossini, who was born on what is today the town's main shopping street. But posters everywhere announce piano recitals, quartet concerts, the *estate corale* (a summer series of visiting choirs), touring orchestras, chamber music of every sort—and the competing festivals of nearby cities. This is a resort town, one with music in its history. It is small, but it is not the only town of its size that is full of music. The people I run into—taxi-drivers, waiters—are aware of which operas are in the works, and are interested in them.

The festival is presenting three Rossini operas this year: "Tancredi," "Otello," and "La Cambiale di Matrimonio"—the last, Rossini's first stage work, on a double bill with "Die Schuldigkeit des ersten Gebotes," which is Mozart's first. I'm looking forward most to "Otello," partly because it's to be done in the beautiful old Teatro Rossini.

Pesaro is packed: almost all Italians take their vacations in August. Everyone who usually goes to Yugoslavia has had to find somewhere else this year; even Trieste, near the frightening border, seems too risky to some. A New Yorker feels at home negotiating streets in which hundreds of people are walking at different paces, shopping, talking, eating, holding hands. I don't feel quite as much at home when I pick up a paper and find that even the progress of *rehearsals* for an opera is news here, or that the front page, above the fold, advises readers where to go to hear a lecture about "Tancredi." Performances are about to start, and they will run through the end of August.

The word is that the singers are good, especially some of the newer faces. Lots of them are Americans—a sign of the times. American musicologists are also much in evidence at the Fondazione Rossini, which has its seat in a delightful little hundred-year-old villa in the Via Fratelli Rosselli. For how many generations—or centuries—have foreigners come here to share their views with the natives about the arts?

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IN TOWN

Mostly Mozart Festival—Final concerts of this summer's season. Aug. 19: The Beaux Arts Trio interprets trios by Mozart, Beethoven, and Dvořák. . . . **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 7 and open to ticket-holders, the ensemble offers works by Hummel and Beethoven (his "Kakadu" Variations). . . . ¶ Aug. 20-21: Gerard Schwarz conducts the Festival Orchestra and Chorus in Mozart's "Great" C-Minor Mass (with soprano Dawn Kotoski, mezzo-soprano Jane Bunnell, tenor Gran Wilson, and baritone Jake Gardner). The program also offers excerpts from "Le Nozze di Figaro" (including two arias sung by Ms. Bunnell), and the Concerto in E-Flat Major, K. 449 (with Cecile Licad as the soloist). . . . ¶ Aug. 22: The Guarneri Quartet performs quartets by Mozart (his eighth, K. 168) and Beethoven (his last, Op. 135); Claude Frank assists the group in Mozart's G-Minor Piano Quartet. . . . **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 7 and open to ticket-holders, Mr. Frank performs a Schubert impromptu and Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata. . . . ¶ Aug. 23-24: Gerard Schwarz conducts the Festival Orchestra in Mozart's last three symphonies, the remarkable products of a two-month span in the summer of 1788, during which the composer also managed to secure loans from better-heeled friends, move his household to the suburbs of Vienna—and toss off a half dozen other pieces. . . . **NOTE:** In pre-concert recitals, beginning both evenings at 7 and open to ticket-holders, pianist Angela Chang performs Beethoven's F-Major Sonata, Op. 10, No. 2, and Mozart's A-Minor Sonata, K. 310. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Evenings at 8.)

Queen Latifah at Jones Beach

New York City Opera—**THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN,** the first performances of a revival (in English) of Janáček's bittersweet operatic fable, based on a Czech comic strip; with Kathryn Gamberoni, Cynthia Rose, Jan Opalach, and John Lankston; conducted by Christopher Keene. (Aug. 20 at 8 and Aug. 25 at 2.). . . **CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA** and **PAGLIACCI,** in a new production of the double bill that transposes the action of both operas to New York's Little Italy. With Sharon Graham, Melanie Sonnenberg, and Stephen O'Mara (in the former); and Gwynne Geyer, John Absalom, and Sigmund Cowan (in the latter). Richard Bradshaw conducting both. (Aug. 22 at 8.). . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Michèle Boucher, Lauren Flanigan, Robert Brubaker, and Carlos Serrano; Joseph Colaneri. (Aug. 23 at 8.). . . **LA TRAVIATA,** in a new production in which the heroine is a consumptive cosmopolitan call girl commuting between New York and Paris; with Sheryl Woods, Martin Thompson, and Gaetan La Perrière; Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Aug. 24 at 2.). . . **MADAME BUTTERFLY,** with Elizabeth Holleque, Robynne Redmon, Stephen O'Mara, and Jeffrey Kneebone; Chris Nance. (Aug. 24 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

New York City Gay Men's Chorus—Gary Miller directs a preview of the group's upcoming European-tour program, including music by Copland, Bernstein, Sondheim, Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Libby Larsen. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Aug. 20 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—Pianist Anne-Marie McDermott performs Bach's Second English Suite and (with violinist Ik-Hwan Bae, clarinettist David Shifrin, and cellist Christopher Costanza) chamber works by Mozart and Hindemith. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Aug. 22-23 at 7:30 and Aug. 25 at 4.)

Boris Slutsky—The pianist's program includes Chopin's Second Sonata, of which the third movement—the well-known funeral march—brings to mind Oscar Wilde's observation, "After playing Chopin, I feel as if I had been weeping over sins that I had never committed, and mourning over tragedies that were not my own." (Yamaha Communication Center Show Room, 142 W. 57th St. Aug. 28 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

Tanglewood—Final classical concerts of the season. Aug. 22 at 8:30: The Takács String Quartet performs three late quartets by Viennese masters: Mozart's twenty-third (and last), K. 590; Schubert's fourteenth (and penultimate), the "Death and the Maiden" Quartet; and Beethoven's "Grosse Fuge," Op. 133 (his last piece but two). . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 9: Christoph von Dohnányi conducts the Cleveland Orchestra in Schubert's B-Minor Symphony (the "Unfinished"), Webern's "Im Sommerwind," and Richard Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks"; and Mitsuko Uchida is the soloist in Mozart's Piano Concerto in C Major, K. 467. . . . **NOTE:** In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 7 and open to ticket-holders, Ms. Uchida and members of the Cleveland Orchestra present chamber works by Mozart. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 8:30: Christoph von Dohnányi conducts the Cleveland Orchestra in Mozart's Serenade, K. 525 ("Eine Kleine Nachtmusik"), Schumann's Third Symphony (the "Rhenish"), and Varèse's "Amériques.". . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 2:30: Christoph von Dohnányi conducts the Cleveland Orchestra and the Tanglewood Festival Chorus in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, with soloists Ruth Falcon (soprano), Janis Taylor (mezzo-soprano), Thomas Moser (tenor), and James Courtney (bass). (Lenox, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 637-1940.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

The O'Jays—The gospel duo of Eddie Levert and Walter Williams have been singing together for over thirty years. In the early sixties, they formed the O'Jays, one of the most popular vocal groups of the time—they had eight No. 1 R. & B. singles ("Love Train," "Back Stabbers," "Use ta Be My Girl," etc.) and a dynamite live show. The hits haven't been coming as frequently since then, but their latest single, a cover of "Emotionally Yours," from the underappreciated Dylan album "Empire Burlesque," has shot up the R. & B. charts like a rocket. "Emotionally Yours" is also the name of the O'Jays' terrific new album, a swaggering, soulful affair that recalls earlier times. Along with the family opener, LeVert, this could be one cool, unmannered show. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Aug. 24 at 7:30 and 11 and Aug. 25 at 11.)

Brave Combo—World Financial Center Plaza, Battery Park City. Aug. 21 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.

Patti LaBelle—Apollo Theatre, 253 W. 125th St. 864-0372. Aug. 22 at 7:30 and 11.

Robert Palmer—Beacon Theatre. Aug. 23 at 8.

Don Pullen—Brooklyn Museum, Sculpture Garden, Eastern Parkway. Aug. 25 at 3. Tickets at the museum on the day of the concert.

New York Voices—Two Musicruise concerts on a Circle Line boat. (Pier 81, Twelfth Ave. at 41st St. 941-1234. Aug. 23 at 8 and 10:30; boarding starts at 7:30 and 10.)

Jones Beach Theatre—Aug. 21 at 8: Bad Company, with Damn Yankees and Tattoo Rodeo. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 8: Ziggy Marley & the Melody Makers, with Queen Latifah and Crystal Waters. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 8: Paul Simon. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 8: **Bonnie Raitt,** with **Chris Isaak and Silvertone.** When Bonnie Raitt sings about getting older and the pleasures, pains, and doubts of experience, it has nothing to do with the demographics of aging, and everything to do with a sense of intimacy and community and real life. Her recent success, after twenty-five years of hard-scrabble touring, is a sweet case of things turning out right; long may she slide that bottleneck up and down the strings of her Stratocaster. As for Chris Isaak—Bachelor Number One, the guy who dresses like the world's most elegant swatch of flowered upholstery, the king of melancholy rockabilly, the voice of the candy-colored man they call the Sandman, the rocker who can out-patter Springsteen—well, what do you give the man who has everything? Worship. . . . ¶ Aug. 27-28 at 8: Michael Bolton. (1-516 221-1000.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Mets—Vs. the St. Louis Cardinals, Aug. 20-22 at 7:40. . . . ¶ Vs. the Cincinnati Reds, Aug. 23 at 7:40, Aug. 24 at 1:15, and Aug. 25 at 8:05.

Yankees—Vs. the Texas Rangers, Aug. 26-28 at 7:30.

(The Mets play at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499, and the Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 293-6000.)

RACING

Horses—At Saratoga Springs: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. The Hopeful is Aug. 24 and the Spinaway is Aug. 26. Through Aug. 26. . . . At Monmouth Park, Oceanport, N.J.: Weekdays, except Mondays, at 1:05. Through Sept. 2. . . . At Atlantic City Race Course: Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:15. Through Aug. 31. . . . **TROTTING** at Yonkers Raceway: Mondays through Saturdays at 8, Tuesdays at 1, and Sundays at 6. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:45.

CHAMPIONSHIP—TENNIS

U.S. Open—The best racket-wielding men and women in the world will be on the courts at the U.S.T.A. National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadow, from Aug. 26 to Sept. 8. For information about match times and tickets, call 1-718 271-5100.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"Renaissance Day"—On Aug. 25, at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden: a tour of the herb garden at 1, followed by a concert of medieval music by the chamber ensemble "The Cats Pause." No tickets necessary.

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—Final performances—Aug. 20 at 5:30: Victoria Marks and company in a new dance piece. . . . At 6:30: Chamber music by Garrufio, from Venezuela. . . . At 8:15: Dance by the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 5:30: Dances by young choreographers Ron Brown, Amiel Malale, and Kevin Magee. . . . At 8:15: The Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 5:30: Chaksam-Pa, a Tibetan dance and opera company. . . . At 7: Venezuelan Carnival jazz. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 5:30: Dances choreographed by Paula Josa-Jones to music by Pauline Oliveros. . . . At 6:30: The Ricciotti Ensemble. . . . At 8:15: A big ol' square dance. . . . ¶ Aug. 24-25 at 4: Two evening-long programs of blues, including Christine Lavin's Four Bad Babes, the Battlefield Band, Odetta, Bobby (Blue) Bland, and the Sensational Gospel Specials. . . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 5:30: The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre. . . . At 8:15: Renowned drummers, including Max Roach, Mario Bauza, Daniel Ponce, and Seiichi Tanaka. (For rain-date information, call 875-5400.)

Walks, Aug. 25—At noon: A tour of TriBeCa, home of DeNiro, sometimes of Streep, Scorsese, and Lauper, as well as of various performance artists and dairy wholesalers. (Sponsored by Adventure on a Shoestring. For information and reservations, call 265-2663.). . . ¶ At 1: A historically minded tour of the financial district. (Sponsored by the Museum of the City of New York. For information and reservations, call 534-1672, Ext. 206.). . . ¶ At 3: A stroll around the Gramercy Park neighborhood. (Sponsored by Adventure on a Shoestring. For information and reservations, call 265-2663.)

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Slacker" (directed by Richard Linklater).
Theatre 2: "City Slickers" (†).
Theatre 3: "La Femme Nikita" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 20: "The Dark Backward" (Adam Rifkin), with Judd Nelson, Bill Paxton, Wayne Newton, and Lara Flynn Boyle. From Aug. 21: A festival of John Waters films.
Theatre 5: "An Angel at My Table" (†).
Theatre 6: "Trust" (†).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Aug. 19: Theatre closed.
Aug. 20-21: "Broadway Melody of 1936" (1935, Roy Del Ruth), with Eleanor Powell, Jack Benny, Robert Taylor, and Una Merkel; and "Broadway Melody of 1940" (1940, Norman Taurog), with Powell, Fred Astaire, and George Murphy.
Aug. 22: "All That Jazz" (1979, Bob Fosse), with Roy Scheider, Jessica Lange, Ann Reinking, and Leland Palmer; and "Fame" (1980, Alan Parker), with Maureen Teefy, Paul McCrane, and Gene Anthony Ray.
Aug. 23-25: "Strike Up the Band" (1940, Busby Berkeley), with Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, June Preisser, and William Tracy; and "Hollywood Hotel" (1937, Berkeley), with Dick Powell, Rosemary Lane, Lola Lane, and Ted Healy.
Aug. 26: Theatre closed.
From Aug. 27: A festival of documentaries and short films from Latin America.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: "Regarding Henry" (†). From Aug. 21: "Barton Fink" (Joel Coen), with John Turturro and John Goodman.
Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 20: (Separate admissions) "Bingo!" (Matthew Robbins); and "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†). From Aug. 21: "Barton Fink."

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Thelma & Louise" (†).
Theatre 2: "Life Stinks" (†).
Theatre 3: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).
Theatre 4: "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.
Theatre 5: Through Aug. 22: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy. From Aug. 23: "Dead Again" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Andy Garcia, Derek Jacobi, Hanna Schygulla, and Emma Thompson.
Theatre 6: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).
Theatre 7: "Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey" (Peter Hewitt), with Keanu Reeves, Alex Winter, William Sadler, Joss Ackland, and George Carlin.

Cinema Village 12th Street, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
"Eating" (†).

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "The Miracle" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Doctor" (†).
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.
Theatre 4: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 5: Through Aug. 22: "Terezin Diary." From Aug. 23: "True Identity" (Charles Lane), with Lenny Henry.
Theatre 6: "Crossing the Line" (David Leland), with Liam Neeson and Joanne Whalley-Kilmer.
Theatre 7: "Straight Out of Brooklyn" (Matty Rich).

Cinema Village 3rd Avenue, between 12th and 13th. (505-7320)
"Voyeur" (Alex van Warmerdam).

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Regarding Henry" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 22: "Bingo!" (Matthew Robbins). From Aug. 23: "Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man" (Simon Wincer), with Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson.
Theatre 3: "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).
Theatre 4: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 16.

"Runaway Train" (playing August 23 and 25 at the Museum of Modern Art) is macho camp. This 1985 melodrama deserves to go down in the annals of this subgenre with the collected works of John Milius and of Sylvester Stallone. Heterosexual camp movies like this one have their own brand of sadomasochism and hysteria. The prime characteristic of these movies is a bizarre insistence on raw masculinity: Heroes prove their manhood by taking hideous punishment. Aficionados will be tipped off to "Runaway Train" as soon as they hear that Jon Voight's convict-hero is named Manny. Just like Milius' Conan and Stallone's Rocky and Rambo, Manny exists to demonstrate what it means to be a man. He even quotes Milius' favorite line from Nietzsche: "That which does not kill me makes me stronger." Manny is always a hairbreadth away from death. The film starts when a court orders his release from an isolation cell that's literally been welded shut for three years. Immediately, Warden Ranken (John P. Ryan) tries to get him killed. Characters like Manny need to have archenemies like Ranken to make them look good. But these two aren't yin and yang—they're ding and dong.

It's equally crucial for characters like Manny to have buddies whom they can school in the ways of the world, or underworld. Manny's sidekick is a youthful thief, boxer, and statutory rapist named (naturally) Buck and played (unnaturally) by Eric Roberts. Together, they break out of prison and hop a four-locomotive train that turns into a runaway when the engineer suddenly drops dead. The rest of the movie is a none-too-playful game of Beat the Clock, as Manny, Buck, and a female railroad worker (Rebecca De Mornay) desperately struggle to stop the four big engines. Under the direction of Andrei Konchalovsky, even the train overacts. After crashing straight through a caboose, it takes on iron tusks and becomes a symbol of social malformation—the Elephant Train. With a voice that sounds like a cross between Brando's and Burt Young's, Voight emotes his way through every line; he competes with the chug-chug-chugging.

Theatre 5: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 6: "Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"The Doctor" (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "Thelma & Louise" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 22: "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner. From Aug. 23: "True Identity" (Charles Lane), with Lenny Henry.
Theatre 3: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 4: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 22: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy. From Aug. 23: "Dead Again" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Andy Garcia, Derek Jacobi, Hanna Schygulla, and Emma Thompson.
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 22: "Regarding Henry" (†). From Aug. 23: "Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man" (Simon Wincer), with Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"La Femme Nikita" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 22: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox. From Aug. 23: "True Identity" (Charles Lane), with Lenny Henry.

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
"Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"City Slickers" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Double Impact" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.
Theatre 2: "Double Impact."

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: "Mobsters" (†). From Aug. 21: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 20: "Pure Luck." From Aug. 21: "Barton Fink" (Joel Coen), with John Turturro and John Goodman.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "The Doctor" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 22: "Boyz N the Hood" (†). From Aug. 23: "Naked Tango" (Leonard Schrader), with Mathilda May, Fernando Ray, Esai Morales, and Vincent D'Onofrio.
Theatre 3: "The Miracle" (†).

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Bingo!" (Matthew Robbins).
Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"The Commitments" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 22: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy. From Aug. 23: "Dead Again" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Andy Garcia, Derek Jacobi, Hanna Schygulla, and Emma Thompson.
Theatre 2: "Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
Through Aug. 22: "Thelma & Louise" (†).
From Aug. 23: "The Story of Boys and Girls" (Pupi Avati, in Italian).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Regarding Henry" (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

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Through Aug. 22: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy.
From Aug. 23: "Dead Again" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Andy Garcia, Derek Jacobi, Hanna Schygulla, and Emma Thompson.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: "Double Impact" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.
Theatre 2: "Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 22: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox. From Aug. 23: "True Identity" (Charles Lane), with Lenny Henry.
Theatre 2: "Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: "In the Shadow of the Stars" (directed by Irving Saraf and Allie Light). From Aug. 21: "The Yen Family" (1988, Yojiri Takita; in Japanese).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 22: "House of Wax" (1953, André de Toth), with Phyllis Kirk, Vincent Price, Frank Lovejoy, and Carolyn Jones. From Aug. 23: "Paris Is Burning" (†).

Bleecker Movie House, 144 Bleecker St. (807-9205)
Theatre 1: "On the Black Hill" (Andrew Grieve).
Theatre 2: To be announced.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "Mobsters" (†).
Theatre 2: "Double Impact" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.
Theatre 2: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Truly, Madly, Deeply" (Anthony Minghella), with Juliet Stevenson, Alan Rickman, Bill Paterson, and Michael Maloney.
Theatre 2: "Blowback" (Marc Levin).
Theatre 3: "My Father's Glory" (Yves Robert, in French), with Julien Ciamaca.
Theatre 4: "Truth or Dare" (Alek Keshishian), with Madonna.

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "City Slickers" (†).
Theatre 2: "Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.
Theatre 3: "The Commitments" (†).
Theatre 4: "Mobsters" (†).
Theatre 5: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).
Theatre 6: "The Commitments" (†).
Theatre 7: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.
Theatre 8: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.
Theatre 9: "Double Impact" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.
Theatre 2: "Jungle Fever" (Spike Lee), with Wesley Snipes and Annabella Sciorra.
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 22: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (†). From Aug. 23: "True Identity" (Charles Lane), with Lenny Henry.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"101 Dalmatians" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 22: A festival of films from Latin America. For information, call 598-7155. From Aug. 23: To be announced.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 22: A festival of films from Latin America. For information, call 598-7155. From Aug. 23: To be announced.
Theatre 3: "City Slickers" (†).
Theatre 4: "Regarding Henry" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).
Theatre 6: "Thelma & Louise" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Crossing the Line" (David Leland), with Liam Neeson and Joanne Whalley-Kilmer.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: "Trust" (†). From Aug. 21: "Barton Fink" (Joel Coen), with John Turturro and John Goodman.
Theatre 2: "Tatie Danielle" (Etienne Chatiliez; in French), with Tsilla Chelton.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"My Mother's Castle" (Yves Robert, in French), with Julien Ciamaca.

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
Through Aug. 22: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (†).
From Aug. 23: "Pastime" (Robin B. Armstrong), with William Russ and Glenn Plummer.

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"The Doctor" (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"The Commitments" (†).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 22: "Everybody's Fine" (Giuseppe Tornatore, in Italian), with Marcello Mastroianni. From Aug. 23: "Uranus" (Claude Berri, in French), with Jean-Pierre Marielle, Philippe Noiret, Michel Blanc, Gérard Desarthe, Gérard Depardieu, and Daniel Prevost.
Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (†).
Theatre 3: "Paris Is Burning" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 22: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy. From Aug. 23: "Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man" (Simon Wincer), with Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson.
Theatre 2: "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey.
Theatre 3: "Regarding Henry" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 22: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox. From Aug. 23: "Dead Again" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Andy Garcia, Derek Jacobi, Hanna Schygulla, and Emma Thompson.
Theatre 5: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 6: "Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "101 Dalmatians" (†); and (evenings only) "Mobsters" (†).
Theatre 2: "Pure Luck" (Nadia Tass), with Martin Short and Danny Glover.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Double Impact" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves" (†).
Theatre 2: "Terminator 2: Judgment Day" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 22: "Another You" (directed by Maurice Phillips), with Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor. From Aug. 23: "Defenseless" (Martin Campbell), with Barbara Hershey, Sam Shepard, and Mary Beth Hurt.
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 22: "Point Break" (Kathryn Bigelow), with Patrick Swayze, Keanu Reeves, Gary Busey, and Lori Petty. From Aug. 23: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).
Theatre 5: "Hot Shots!" (Jim Abrahams), with Charlie Sheen, Cary Elwes, Valeria Golino, and Jon Cryer.
Theatre 6: "Bingo!" (Matthew Robbins).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
Through Aug. 22: "Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.

Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson in "Dead Again"

From Aug. 23: "True Identity" (Charles Lane), with Lenny Henry.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 22: "Body Parts" (Eric Red), with Jeff Fahey. From Aug. 23: "Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man" (Simon Wincer), with Mickey Rourke and Don Johnson.
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 22: "Delirious" (Tom Mankiewicz), with John Candy. From Aug. 23: "Mystery Date" (Jonathan Wacks), with Ethan Hawke, Teri Polo, and Brian McNamara.
Theatre 3: "V. I. Warshawski" (Jeff Kanew), with Kathleen Turner.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
Through Aug. 22: "Boyz N the Hood" (†).
From Aug. 23: "Dead Again" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Andy Garcia, Derek Jacobi, Hanna Schygulla, and Emma Thompson.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Mobsters" (†).
Theatre 2: "Double Impact" (Sheldon Lettich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

West Side Cinema 1 and 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: "Straight Out of Brooklyn" (Matty Rich).
Theatre 2: "Doc Hollywood" (Michael Caton-Jones), with Michael J. Fox.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Biograph Cinema, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Aug. 19: "The Desert Fox" (1951, directed by Henry Hathaway), with James Mason, Jessica Tandy, Cedric Hardwicke, and Luther Adler; and "The Desert Rats" (1953, Robert Wise), with Mason, Richard Burton, Robert Newton, and Chips Rafferty.
Aug. 20-21: "The Last Picture Show" (1971, Peter Bogdanovich), with Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Ben Johnson, and Cloris Leachman; and "Texasville" (1990, Bogdanovich), with Bridges, Shepherd, Bottoms, Annie Potts, and Leachman.
Aug. 22-24: "The Glenn Miller Story" (†); and "Orchestra Wives" (1942, Archie Mayo), with Ann Rutherford, George Montgomery, and Lynn Bari.
Aug. 25-27: "The Godfather" (†).
From Aug. 28: "The Godfather Part II" (†).

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through Aug. 20: "The Little Shop of Horrors" (1960, Roger Corman), with Jonathan Haze and Jackie Joseph; "A Bucket of Blood" (1959, Corman), with Dick Miller; and "Not of This Earth" (1957, Corman), with Paul Birch and Beverly Garland.
Aug. 21: "X—the Unknown" (1957, Leslie Norman), with Dean Jagger, Edward Chapman, and Leo McKern; and "Horror Hotel" (1960, John Moxey), with Dennis Lotis, Christopher Lee, and Betta St. John.
Aug. 22: "Black Sunday" (†); and "Caltiki,

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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

the Immortal Monster" (1959, Robert Hampton), with John Merivale.
Aug. 23-24: "Lensman" (1984, Y. Kawajiri and K. Hiokawa); and "The Mysterians" (1959, Inoshiro Honda), with Kenji Sahara.
Aug. 25: "Stalker" (1979, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian).
Aug. 26: "Horror of Dracula" (1958, Terence Fisher), with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee; and "The Curse of Frankenstein" (1957, Fisher), with Cushing and Hazel Court.
Aug. 27: "Robinson Crusoe on Mars" (1964, Bryon Haskin), with Paul Mantee and Vic Lundin; and "Crack in the World" (1965, Andrew Marton), with Dana Andrews, Janette Scott, Kieron Moore, and Alexander Knox.
From Aug. 28: "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T." (†); and "The 3 Worlds of Gulliver" (1960, Jack Sher), with Kerwin Mathews, Jo Morrow, and June Thorburn.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Aug. 19: "King of Hearts" (1967, Philippe de Broca; in French and English), with Alan Bates and Geneviève Bujold; and "The Mad Adventures of 'Rabbi' Jacob" (1973, Gérard Oury; in French), with Louis de Funès.
Aug. 20: "Blonde Venus" (1932, Josef von Sternberg), with Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Cary Grant, and Dickie Moore; and "Shanghai Express" (1932, von Sternberg), with Dietrich, Clive Brook, Warner Oland, and Anna May Wong.
Aug. 21: "Fahrenheit 451" (1966, François Truffaut), with Julie Christie and Oskar Werner; and "Silent Running" (1972, Douglas Trumbill), with Bruce Dern.
Aug. 22: "Singin' in the Rain" (†); and "Meet Me in St. Louis" (1944, Vincente Minnelli), with Judy Garland, Margaret O'Brien, and Mary Astor.
Aug. 23-24: "Interiors" (1978, Woody Allen), with Diane Keaton, Maureen Stapleton, Geraldine Page, Mary Beth Hurt, Sam Waterston, and E. G. Marshall; and "Love and Death" (1975, Allen), with Allen and Keaton.
Aug. 25: "Lolita" (†); and "Killer's Kiss" (1955, Stanley Kubrick), with Frank Silvera.
Aug. 26: "Masculine Feminine" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud and Chantal Goya; and "A Married Woman" (†).
Aug. 27: "The Eagle" (1925, Clarence Brown; silent), with Rudolph Valentino, Louise Dresser, and Vilma Banky; and "Sparrows" (1926, William Beaudine; silent), with Mary Pickford.
Aug. 28: "Dark Victory" (†); and "Now, Voyager" (1942, Irving Rapper), with Bette Davis, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains, and John Loder.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Aug. 19 at 2:30: "Mystery Train" (1989, directed by Jim Jarmusch).... ¶ Aug. 19 at 6: "The Grey Fox" (1982, Phillip Borsos), with Richard Farnsworth.... ¶ Aug. 20 at 2:30 and 6: A new Soviet film, to be announced.... ¶ Aug. 22 at 2:30 and Aug. 24 at 5: "The Cassandra Crossing" (1977, George Pan Cosmatos), with Richard Harris, Burt Lancaster, and Sophia Loren.... ¶ Aug. 22 at 6 and Aug. 24 at 2: "Now or Never" (1921, Hal Roach and Fred Newmeyer; silent), with Harold Lloyd and Mildred Davis; and "The Harvey Girls" (1946, George Sidney), with Judy Garland, Ray Bolger, Angela Lansbury, and John Hodiak.... ¶ Aug. 23 at 2:30 and Aug. 25 at 5: "The Last Journey" (1935, Bernard Vorhaus), with Hugh Williams.... ¶ Aug. 23 at 6 and Aug. 25 at 2: "Runaway Train" (see page 14).... ¶ Aug. 26 at 2:30 and Aug. 27 at 6: "Murder on the Orient Express" (1974, Sidney Lumet), with Albert Finney, Lauren Bacall, and Ingrid Bergman.... ¶ Aug. 26 at 6 and Aug. 27 at 2:30: "Les Rendez-vous d'Anna" (1978, Chantal Akerman; in French), with Aurore Clement.

Museum of Television and Radio, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"On Stage at Carnegie Hall: A Centennial Celebration." Aug. 20-24: "Gala of Stars" (1981, PBS), with Marilyn Horne, Isaac Stern, Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, and others.... From Aug. 27: "Carnegie Hall: The Grand Reopening" (1987, PBS), with Isaac Stern, Leonard Bernstein, Marilyn Horne, Frank Sinatra, and others. Showings Tuesdays at 2:30 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 2:30.... ¶ "A Salute to Monty Python." From Aug. 20: "The Pythons" (1979, BBC), a documentary. Showings Tuesdays at 12:15, 2:30, and 5:30; Wednesdays through Fridays at 12:15 and 2:30; and Saturdays at 12:15.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—A series of Western films. Aug. 20-21 at 2: "Coogan's Bluff" (1968, Don Siegel), with Clint Eastwood and Lee J. Cobb.... ¶ Aug. 22 at 2: "Lonesome Cowboys" (1968, Andy Warhol), with Viva and Taylor Mead.... ¶ Aug. 23 at 1:30: "The Wild Bunch" (1969, Sam Peckinpah), with William Holden, Ernest Borgnine, and Robert Ryan.... ¶ Aug. 24 at 2 and Aug. 27-28 at 1: "Once Upon a Time in the West" (1969, Sergio Leone), with Henry Fonda, Claudia Cardinale, Jason Robards, and Charles Bronson.... ¶ Aug. 25 at 2: "Little Big Man" (1970, Arthur Penn), with Dustin Hoffman and Faye Dunaway.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Aug. 21 at 12:30 and 6: "The Proud and the Beautiful" (1953, Yves Allégret; in French), with Gérard Philipe, Michèle Morgan, Carlos Lopez Moctezuma, and Victor-Manuel Mendoza.... ¶ Aug. 21 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Riptide" (1948, Allégret; in French), with Madeleine Robinson, Philipe, Jane Marken, and Jean Servais.... ¶ Aug. 28 at 12:30 and 6: "Boudu Saved from Drowning" (1931, Jean Renoir; in French), with Michel Simon and Charles Grandval.... ¶ Aug. 28 at 3:15 and 8:45: "They Were Five" (1936, Julien Duvivier; in French, with no English subtitles), with Jean Gabin, Charles Vanel, and Viviane Romance.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

An Angel at My Table—Based on the autobiography of the New Zealand novelist and poet Janet Frame. The film covers the first forty years or so of the writer's life—she was born in 1924—and takes close to three hours to tell the story. When it's all over, you feel that you know far too little about Janet Frame and far too much about the film's director, Jane Campion. The movie (which was made as a three-part miniseries for Australian television) is a succession of odd, mannered tableaux, more or less in the style of Campion's 1990 art-house hit, "Sweetie." The compositions emphasize the peculiarities of Janet's appearance, especially in her childhood and awkward adolescence: she has a stiff, frizzy mop of bright-orange hair, and her teeth are badly decayed. The Janet Frame we see in this film doesn't seem to have an inner life, and without that she has no life at all. Even the most dramatic events in her life are treated so flatly and elliptically that we're unable to respond; time after time, we find that we can't orient ourselves in crucial scenes, because the director hasn't bothered to establish the characters or the setting. Writers' lives are weird enough without being subjected to this sort of willful disruption of their emotional continuity. Campion's perverse exercise in biographical filmmaking deserves a new title: "My Incomprehensible Career." Janet is played by three actresses: as a child, by Alexia Keogh; as a young teenager, by Karen Fergusson; and, as an adult, by Kerry Fox. Screenplay by Laura Jones.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/3/91.) (Angelika Film Center.)

Black Sunday (1960)—A rich draught of vampire's blood. With its crypts and cobwebs and eerie old castles set in batty, steamy forests, it's sumptuous enough to have acquired a considerable reputation. The resurrected two-hundred-year-old witch Princess Asa and the beautiful Princess Katia are both played by the English actress Barbara Steele in a deadpan manner that makes evil and good all but indistinguishable; in both roles, she looks like Jacqueline Kennedy in a trance. But you wouldn't want her to be any different in this studio-made Moldavia of 1830. The cinematographer-director, Mario Bava, who specialized in occult horror, and most of the actors are Italian; the story is derived from Gogol. Dubbed into English.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Aug. 22.)

Boyz N the Hood—The writer and director, John Singleton, is a twenty-three-year-old graduate of the U.S.C. film school. This movie, his first, is a classically constructed—and therefore rather predictable—coming-of-age drama about young black men growing up on the mean streets of south-central Los Angeles. The picture conveys a vivid sense of the dangers, both physical and emotional, of day-to-day existence in this ravaged urban environment. Even the quietest domestic scenes are charged with a kind of battle-front tension: there's always the ominous metronomic beat of police helicopters in the background, and sudden sputters of gunfire seem to intrude on every moment of calm or reflection. It's a war zone, and its inhabitants—the people on the front lines—mostly don't have the luxury of planning long-range survival strategies: they're too busy reacting to the immediate, unremitting daily threats. Singleton's evocation of real people's struggles to find some measure of peace and sanity in these grim urban circumstances is heartfelt and often moving, and the movie provides a welcome corrective to the dehumanizing sensationalism of the local-news version of inner-city life. But the young filmmaker's professionalism and precocious self-assurance sometimes work against his best instincts. Singleton's plot is disappointingly conventional; it obeys screenwriting-class rules. The experience he's dealing with here deserves something more than the tidy dramatic structure that he has imposed on it. We get glimpses of what the movie might have been in the complex, magnetic performance of Ice Cube, a rap star (formerly of N.W.A.), who plays a neighborhood gangster type named Doughboy. Also with Cuba Gooding, Jr., Larry Fishburne, Nia Long, Tyra Ferrell, and Angela Bassett.—T.R. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Olympia.... ¶ Cinema II, and Loews Astor Plaza; through Aug. 22.... ¶ Criterion Center; starting Aug. 23.)

City Slickers—This feel-good comedy, directed by Ron Underwood from a script by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, is a depressingly efficient piece of Hollywood product. The hero, Mitch Robbins (Billy Crystal), is a thirty-nine-year-old New York family man who's going through a killer midlife crisis. His wife (Patricia Wettig) gets so fed up with his moping that she virtually orders him to take a vacation with his buddies Ed (Bruno Kirby) and Phil (Daniel Stern); Ed, a daredevil, macho type, has arranged for them to spend two weeks on a real cattle drive out West. Mitch's wife looks him in the eye, and says earnestly, "Go and find your smile"—and, ninety minutes later, there it is, a grin as big as all outdoors. His pals pick up the odd nugget of wisdom along the trail, too. The movie alternates predictable tenderfoot gags (sore behinds, stampedes, and the like) with long, ludicrous passages of group-therapy-on-the-range. Jack Palance, as Curly, the trail boss, manages some dry, macabre comic effects, and the animals are good—they're interesting to look at, and they don't make bad jokes. You can't help sympathizing with the cattle; by the time the movie is over, you know what it feels like to be part of the herd. Also with Helen Slater.—T.R. (6/17/91) (Angelika Film Center, Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

The Commitments—Directed by Alan Parker. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Dark Victory (1939)—Bette Davis in a kitsch classic, playing a rich doomed-to-die girl who throws herself away on meaningless pleasures and then finds redemption in unselfish

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love—for her doctor, George Brent. A gooey collection of clichés, but Davis slams her way through them in her nerviest style. The steals from all over include a Lawrentian stable groom, played by Humphrey Bogart. Ronald Reagan is among the heroine's swains, and Geraldine Fitzgerald is her best friend. Edmund Goulding directed.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 28.)

The Doctor—Although it's sure to hook some viewers who want to see the medical establishment get knocked, this is no exposé—it's yet another story of identity crisis in the professional class, a fraternal, if not identical, twin of "Regarding Henry." William Hurt plays the surgical golden boy who develops a case of galloping humanity after he's diagnosed with throat cancer; Christine Lahti and Charlie Korsmo play his neglected wife and son; Elizabeth Perkins is the life-force who inspires him (she's suffering from a Grade IV brain tumor); and, in matched parts, Mandy Patinkin is a callous Jewish doctor (Hurt's longtime partner) and Adam Arkin is a saintly Jewish doctor (who shows Hurt correct values). The director, Randa Haines, and the screenwriter, Robert Caswell, titillate the audience with a barrage of doctors' jokes and then try to prove that the cynical professionalism of hospital staffs is no laughing matter. In effect, the movie goes from comic shtick to problem-drama shtick, and fuses them. Hurt's performance is the type usually described as "accomplished," but what exactly does it accomplish? It's a careful embodiment of a clammed-up individual; not a hint of zest or dirt or soulfulness seeps out. Based on "A Taste of My Own Medicine," by Ed Rosenbaum, M.D.—M.S. (Village East Cinemas, Gramercy, Cinema I, and Loews Paramount.)

Eating—All the action in Henry Jaglom's film takes place at the fortieth-birthday party of a Southern California woman named Helene (Lisa Richards), and all the characters—thirty-eight of them—are women. None of the women at this party—with the exception of Helene's mother (Frances Bergen), who represents the values of an older generation—can eat without guilt; several of them have clinical eating disorders, for which they hate themselves. Jaglom films them in his usual group-therapy style: the camera remains fixed as characters lob banal confessions and accusations at each other. This is meant to create the illusion of raw emotional truth, but the bulimics' ball Jaglom throws here isn't much of a party, and it's bad therapy, too. Whatever Jaglom may have intended, his film winds up trivializing its theme and humiliating its subjects. He's advertising the movie as "A Very Serious Comedy About Women and Food," but its "serious" message is glibly offensive, and there's nothing funny about it.—T.R. (5/20/91) (Cinema Village 12th Street.)

Europa Europa—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness; as translator and mascot, he accompanies the German soldiers on their march through Russia. By the time he is initiated into the Hitler Youth, he has already run through several identities, and has proved himself capable of playing his roles with conviction and enthusiasm. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately bal-

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IN BRIEF–Cont'd

anced narrative and moral tensions. She shows us the thoroughness of Nazi terror in the pained expression of a teen-age boy who doesn't dare allow himself to be seduced. Also with Julie Delpy, Andre Wilms, Halina Labonarska, and Rene Hofschneider. The real Salomon Perel appears, as himself, in the movie's final scene. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Lincoln Plaza.)

La Femme Nikita—The end of French cinema as we know it. Written and directed by Luc Besson. With Anne Parillaud, Jean-Hugues Anglade, Tcheky Karyo, and (in a cameo) Jeanne Moreau. In French.—T.R. (Angelika Film Center, and Eastside Cinema.)

The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T. (1953)—This was cut shortly after its first disastrous showings, but later became available in its original form. The movie is mostly the nightmare–fantasy of a little boy who doesn't understand why his mother insists on his practicing the piano, and who hates his music teacher, Dr. Terwilliker. You can see why: Hans Conried is Dr. T., and he's the slimiest villain since W. C. Fields slipped the gin into Baby LeRoy's bottle. In Dr. T.'s castle, five hundred boys with their five thousand fingers are trapped at a mile–long double–decker piano. Unfortunately, good, progressive parents, knowing that this was a Stanley Kramer production, from a script by Dr. Seuss, took their children to see it, and thus heard their kids scream with fear and excitement. (The kids didn't take their parents with them when they went to see "Psycho.") The picture doesn't live up to its idea, but Conried does have a wonderfully foolish number—the "Dressing Song" ("My Do-Me-Do Duds"). With Tommy Rettig, Peter Lind Hayes, and Mary Healy. Directed by Roy Rowland; choreography by Eugene Loring; cinematography by Franz Planer; music by Frederick Hollander; Allan Scott worked on the script with Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel).—P.K. (Film Forum 2; starting Aug. 28.)

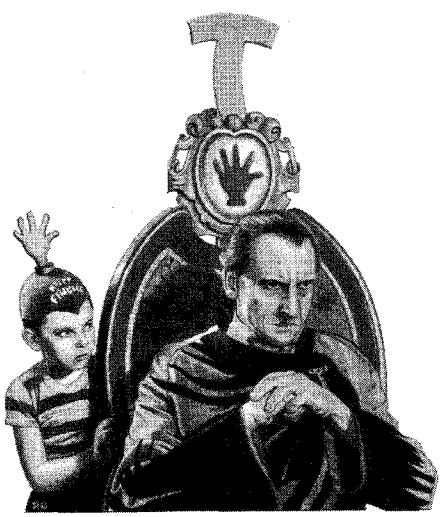
The Glenn Miller Story (1954)—Blandly dull big bio, with James Stewart as a pedantic Glenn Miller; with Miller trying to discover "his own sound," it's like a Hollywood version of the life of an inventor. June Allyson plays the all-American square Miller marries; right after the ceremony, she is taken up to Harlem, where Gene Krupa and Louis Armstrong get into a jam session (they do "Basin Street Blues"), and it's typical of the family-films format that we're expected to identify with her getting tired and sleepy. Most of the music in this film does have a soporific quality. Miller's famous numbers, such as "Tuxedo Junction" and "Little Brown Jug," have been re-created (Joe Yukl dubs Stewart on the trombone), and they don't quite swing. The director, Anthony Mann, seems out of his element. With Henry (later Harry) Morgan, Sig Rumann, George Tobias, Charles Drake, Carleton Young, Frances Langford (as a blonde), and the Modernaires, the Archie Savage Dancers, and the Mello-Men. The script is by Valentine Davies and Oscar Brodney.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Aug. 22-24.)

The Godfather (1972)—A wide, startlingly vivid view of a Mafia dynasty, in which organized crime becomes an obscene nightmare image of American free enterprise. The movie is a popular melodrama with its roots in the gangster films of the thirties, but it expresses a new tragic realism, and it's altogether extraordinary. Francis Ford Coppola directed. Marlon Brando is Don Vito Corleone, with Al Pacino, John Cazale, James Caan, and Talia Shire as his children. The cast includes Robert Duvall, Richard Castellano as Clemenza, Diane Keaton, John Marley, Lenny Montana, Richard Conte, Sterling Hayden, Abe Vigoda, Al Lettieri, Alex Rocco, Richard Bright, Simonetta Stefanelli as Apollonia, Gianni Russo, and Al Martino. The script, credited to Mario Puzo and Coppola, is based on Puzo's best–seller. (The film runs just under three hours; the period is 1945 to the mid–fifties.) Cinematography by Gordon Willis; production design by Dean Tavoularis; music by Nino Rota.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; Aug. 25-27.)

The Godfather Part II (1974)—The daring of Part II is that it enlarges the scope and deepens the meaning of the first film. Visually, Part II is far more complexly beautiful than the first, just as it's thematically richer, more shadowed, fuller. The completed work, contrasting the early manhood of Vito (Robert De Niro) with the life of Michael, his inheritor (Al Pacino), is an epic vision of the corruption of America. (The three hours and twenty minutes of Part II span almost seventy years.) Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. The script is credited to Coppola and Mario Puzo, from Puzo's novel. The cast includes Robert Duvall, John Cazale, Lee Strasberg, Michael V. Gasso, Talia Shire, Troy Donahue, Gianni Russo, Diane Keaton, G. D. Spradlin, Morgana King, Harry Dean Stanton, Joe Spinell, Fay Spain, Danny Aiello, Richard Bright, Gaston Moschin as Fanucci, Abe Vigoda, Tom Rosqui, B. Kirby, Jr., Leopoldo Trieste, and a brief appearance by James Caan, and appearances by Phil Feldman, Roger Corman, and William Bowers as United States senators. Cinematography by Gordon Willis; production design by Dean Tavoularis; music by Nino Rota, conducted by Carmine Coppola.—P.K. (Biograph Cinema; starting Aug. 28.)

101 Dalmatians (1961)—One of the few Disney animated features that please adults as much as children, this action comedy has loads of waggish charm. The plot is out of a horror film. As Cruella De Vil prepares ninety-nine young Dalmatians for the kill so she can make dogskin coats, you can't help thinking, "The Silence of the Pups." By telling the story from the perspective of Pongo and Perdita, parents of fifteen dognap victims, the Disney team turns it into a light-fantastic parody: a dog's-eye (or child's-eye) view of storybook Britain. Humans are "pets," and a country-wide canine corps takes over when agencies like Scotland Yard fail. Cruella has been justly celebrated for her Tallulah-from-Hell flair (Betty Lou Gerson contributes an arsenal of Bankhead-like snarls). But Pongo is every bit her match. He's a gallant, resourceful animal with surprising pockets of slyness and gaiety, and the crisp, virile voice of Rod Taylor. Headed by a blustery sheepdog colonel, a Kipling-esque trio of barnyard soldiers aid Pongo and Perdita. The small army of pups form a lovable composite character and a constantly changing sight gag. Trekking through a blizzard-blasted landscape, they're a cross between a canine caterpillar chain and a coal-flecked snowdrift. Bill Peet wrote the smart script, from Dodie Smith's book; Wolfgang Reitherman, Clyde Geronimi, and Hamilton S. Luske directed.—M.S. (Guild. . . . ¶ Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Metro Cinema. Matinées only.)

Life Stinks—Mel Brooks' latest is barely a comedy: it's mostly a Capra-esque whimsy about street people. Brooks stars as billionaire Goddard Bolt, who takes a rival tycoon's bet that he can't last for a month as a homeless person. Bolt foolishly thinks that he's shrewd enough to flourish in any circumstance; Brooks would be better off if that were true. The role of a pampered plutocrat who touches bottom clamps down on his funniest quality—his go-for-broke irrepressibility. Only a couple of scenes have a saving gracelessness: Brooks and Rudy De Luca (as an indigent who thinks he's J. Paul Getty) slap each other silly like the Three Stooges rolled into two. Lesley Ann Warren tries too hard to be feisty, then magical, as a fairy-tale bag lady.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII.)



Tommy Rettig and Hans Conried in "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T."

Lolita (1962)—Wild, marvellously enjoyable comedy, adapted from Nabokov's novel. James Mason is the lover of little girls, the smiling, obsequious, phony Humbert Humbert; Shelley Winters is Charlotte Haze, the culture vulture rampant; Sue Lyon is her sexy daughter, Lolita; and Peter Sellers (at his most inspired) is Quilty, Humbert Humbert's walking paranoia. Stanley Kubrick directed.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 25.)

A Married Woman (1964)—Jean-Luc Godard wrote and directed this peculiarly abstract treatment of a young married woman (Macha Méril), her dissatisfactions, her patterns as a consumer, and her infidelities. There are witty bits, but they don't add up to much. Godard doesn't seem involved with the woman; he doesn't seem to care about her. With Bernard Noël, Philippe Leroy, and Roger Leenhardt as himself. In French.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 26.)

The Miracle—A beautiful new film by the Irish writer and director Neil Jordan ("Mona Lisa," "The Company of Wolves"). The setting is the coastal town of Bray, which is a short train ride from Dublin. Two teen-agers, Jimmy (Niall Byrne) and Rose (Lorraine Pilkington), spend most of their days wandering along the seaside promenade and making up stories about the people they run into: taking off from the human material that presents itself to them, the kids trade verbal riffs with the gleeful competitiveness of jamming musicians. One day, they spot a mysterious-looking blond woman (Beverly D'Angelo), and Jimmy becomes obsessed with her. He pursues her, in Bray and in Dublin, with an ardor that's partly sexual and partly something else—a feeling so muddled and inchoate that he can't put a name to it. Jordan turns this simple story into a clear, complete vision of experience: everything we see (and hear) flows into everything else, with an unpredictable rightness. The imagery draws on some pretty outré sources, and the climax—the miracle of the title—is a daring, flamboyant gesture. But Jordan manages to unite everything—the florid imagery, the dark emotional undertones, the flaky comedy, the astonishing physical beauty of the Irish seacoast—into a single, unbroken mood, a smooth arc connecting the past and the present, the familiar and the unforeseen. Also with Donal McCann. The cinematography, by Philippe Rousselot, is extraordinary.—T.R. (7/15/91) (Village East Cinemas, and Cinema 3rd Avenue.)

Mobsters—When Christian Slater, as young Lucky Luciano, tells Meyer Lansky (Patrick Dempsey), Bugsy Siegel (Richard Grieco), and Frank Costello (Costas Mandylor) that it's time to play "with the big boys," he's delivering the statement of purpose for this bloody bore of a Mob travesty. It's an excuse for the latest crop of media-spawned personalities—the male equivalent of starlets—to invade the heavy-duty genre of the gangster film. They don't come up to Cagney's spats. The witless script, by Michael Mahern and Nicholas Kazan, and the goosed-up direction, by Michael Karbelnikoff, present the antiheroes as angels without dirty faces. These Jewish and Italian thugs bring an ecumenical spirit as well as modern business organization to the founding of the Syndicate. The moviemakers regard this as quite an accomplishment. With F. Murray Abraham, Michael Gambon, Lara Flynn Boyle, and the set-devouring Anthony Quinn.—M.S. (Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and National Twin. . . . ¶ Metro Cinema. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Baronet; through Aug. 20.)

The Naked Gun 2½: The Smell of Fear—Leslie Nielsen plays Frank Drebin, a middle-aged police lieutenant whose lethal weapon is utter obliviousness. This movie—like its predecessors, the 1982 TV series "Police Squad!" and the 1988 film "The Naked Gun"—has the look of cheap, hasty television action drama. It's oblivious of production values, narrative sense, and all the higher, finer aspects of the human spirit—of everything, that is, except the impulse to spray us with jokes and knock us out of our chairs. The director, David Zucker, has a defiantly cheesy style. For him, nothing's ever too trashy or worn out to be used again; what he practices is, in the truest sense, pulp comedy. There's

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a hint of an enviromental theme in the plot of "NG 2½," but Zucker and his co-writer, Pat Proft, never allow it to slow down the picture's relentless barrage of slapstick, movie parodies, outrageous double-entendres, and cracked musical production numbers. And Leslie Nielsen is inspired. He plays Drebin as a straight arrow who's finally letting go, giving in to his repressed impulses: he sings, he dances, he loves, he shoots to kill. Nielsen combines B-movie earnestness, exuberant mugging, and a trouper's slightly desperate cheerfulness: he turns this rather alarming character into a sweet, ebullient lunatic—albeit one who's hell on innocent bystanders. Also with Priscilla Presley, Robert Goulet, George Kennedy, Richard Griffiths, and O. J. Simpson.—T.R. (7/29/91) (Loews 19th Street East 6, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews Festival. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through Aug. 20.)

Paris Is Burning—Jennie Livingston's documentary about gay black and Latino men who compete in drag balls is a beautiful piece of work—lively, intelligent, exploratory. The drag queens we see here seem to be holding up a mirror to the world of the empowered as they see it in movies, TV shows, and magazines. In the ballroom, some present themselves as elegant, glamorous women in designer outfits, and walk with the hip-swinging slouch of runway models, while others adopt more mundane personas: college students (of both sexes); military men; Wall Street businessmen; aristocrats at play, dressed for yachting or riding to hounds. The criteria by which all these turns are judged is verisimilitude—"realness." The material is almost too rich, too suggestive. Everything about the ball culture signifies so blatantly and so promiscuously that the movie induces a kind of semiotic daze. Livingston is smart enough not to reduce her subjects to the sum of their possible meanings, perhaps because she realizes that the way the drag performers manipulate image and fetishes and the iconography of popular culture is for many of them a sophisticated form of humor. The most self-aware of the gay men in this picture revel in the ironies of their social and sexual identities, and Livingston makes us appreciate the comic grace and the strange wisdom of that approach. Like all the best documentary filmmakers, she does her subjects the honor of allowing them to retain some of their mystery. Edited by Jonathan Oppenheim.—T.R. (3/25/91) (Lincoln Plaza. . . . ¶ Film Forum; starting Aug. 23.)

Regarding Henry—Harrison Ford, hot-shot lawyer, takes bullets in the head and shoulder from a corner-market thief. He loses his memory and physical control, regains the ability to talk and walk, and discovers that his long-spurned wife (Annette Bening) and thirteen-year-old daughter (Mikki Allen) are all that's important to him. The writer, Jeffrey Abrams, combines feeble finger-pointing satire of the success-obsessed upper class with life lessons that are hard to swallow. They won't go down past the artificially induced lumps in the throat. The director, Mike Nichols, in his second attempt to wring tears and laughs from *haute bourgeois* marital dramedy, falls flatter than ever—he goes from "Heartburn" to filmmaking arrhythmia. With the exception of an eager beagle named Buddy, this is the worst-performed, limpest, least credible Nichols movie yet. While it purports to attack yuppie values, the hero fulfills the latest yuppie fantasy: chucking everything and starting from square one. A nice trick for those who can afford it.—M.S. (Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews Tower East, Worldwide Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ Loews 34th Street Showplace; through Aug. 22.)

Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves—A dull, dutiful trek through the legend of the bandit of Sherwood Forest, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor. Watching this picture is about as much fun as paying taxes, and far less stirring emotionally. We never feel that anyone involved in making this multimillion-dollar, two-hour-and-twenty-one-minute spectacle had any real affection for the story. The screenplay, by Pen Densham and John Watson, is a mishmash of halfhearted dramatizations of episodes from the legend and equally halfhearted nods to contemporary attitudes. If the movie had an exuberant spirit—as the 1938 "Adventures of Robin Hood," with Errol Flynn, had, in near-manic

At Theatre 80 St. Marks, Rudolph Valentino in "The Eagle"

overabundance—we'd be more inclined to overlook the script's incoherence. But there's not much joy in evidence here. The direction, by Kevin Reynolds, is stolid and impersonal, and Kevin Costner seems miscast as Robin: he's not a forceful enough actor for this role. The merry men are an unmemorable lot; even Little John (Nick Brimble) and Friar Tuck (Michael McShane) don't make strong impressions, because they haven't been given anything interesting to do. (In this version, Little John *loses* his famous battle with Robin in the stream.) The audience seems to perk up only when Alan Rickman, as the villainous Sheriff of Nottingham, is on the screen. He gives a florid, theatrical performance—there's real glee in his malice.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Criterion Center. . . . ¶ 23rd St. West Triplex, and Cinema 3; through Aug. 22.)

Singin' in the Rain (1952)—This exuberant satire of Hollywood in the late twenties, at the time of transition from silents to talkies, is probably the most enjoyable of all American movie musicals. The teamwork of the stars, Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor, and Debbie Reynolds, is joyful and the material is first-rate—ranging from parodies of the Busby Berkeley style of choreography to the Charleston and Black Bottom performed straight. The film falters during a too-long love song on a deserted studio stage (later cut from some of the prints) and during a lavish oversize Broadway ballet, but these sequences don't seriously affect one's enjoyment. With Jean Hagen as an imbecile movie-queen, Millard Mitchell as a producer, Cyd Charisse as a dancer, Rita Moreno as a flapper actress, Madge Blake as a syrupy columnist, Douglas Fowley as a distraught director. Directed by Kelly and Stanley Donen from the witty, affectionate script by Betty Comden and Adolph Green. The songs by Nacio Herb Brown with lyrics by Arthur Freed include "All I Do Is Dream of You," "Make 'Em Laugh," "I've Got a Feeling You're Fooling," "Wedding of the Painted Doll," "Fit as a Fiddle," "Should I?," "You Were Meant for Me," "Good Mornin'," "You Are My Lucky Star," and, of course, "Singin' in the Rain." The song "Moses" is by Comden and Green and Roger Edens. Cinematography by Harold Rosson.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 22.)

Terminator 2: Judgment Day—The killer cyborg who was played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the original "Terminator" (1984) has returned—only this time he's the hero. The first film, which was written and directed by James Cameron, is one of the genre-movie classics of the eighties: a lean, witty science-fiction movie without great pretensions to significance. The sequel, also written (with William Wisher) and directed by Cameron, is far less satisfying. The picture is full of spectacular action sequences and dazzling special effects, but the narrative doesn't have the snap of the original's: it's lumbering and monotonous, and it carries a heavy-handed anti-nuke message. The old, Schwarzenegger-model Terminator (the T-800) has been superseded by a more advanced model, the T-1000 (Robert Patrick), who is sleeker and more versatile. T-800, who represented the ultimate in destructive technology in the first film, seems almost human here: compared to T-1000, he's a vulnerable guy (or guyoid). The whole movie is based on the insane conceit that Arnold Schwarzenegger is the *underdog*. That's a stretch. Also with Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong, and Joe Morton. Effects by Stan Winston and many, many others.—T.R. (7/29/91) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Thelma & Louise—The heroines, played by Geena Davis (Thelma) and Susan Sarandon (Louise), are a couple of Arkansas women who set out for a weekend in the mountains and wind up speeding through the Southwest, on the run from the law. (Louise has murdered a man who tried to rape Thelma in a roadhouse parking lot.) The movie, written by Callie Khouri and directed by Ridley Scott, is designed to keep pushing the women farther and farther out there—past the point of no return, into the vanishing point of a vast Western landscape, and, finally, over the edge of the world. It's a pretty shameless outlaw fantasy; the feminist justification that the script provides for the heroines' behavior doesn't make their actions any less preposterous. But you can recognize the crudeness of the movie's narrative devices and still have an awfully good time. There's an exhilarating ease and intuitiveness in the way Davis and Sarandon work together, and the camera lingers on them as if it couldn't get enough of them. Scott's direction gives the story a pleasantly dreamy quality: when Thelma and Louise are on the road, the movie has the look of a mirage, a jewelled shimmer that keeps us half hypnotized. He turns Davis and Sarandon into outlaw princesses, and they're so vivid and likable that they carry us past the plot's most obvious contrivances; a little disbelief seems a small price to pay for being allowed to remain in their company. Also with Harvey Keitel, Brad Pitt, Christopher McDonald, Michael Madsen, Timothy Carhart, and Stephen Tobolowsky. The luminous cinematography is by Adrian Biddle.—T.R. (6/3/91) (Loews Village Theatre VII, and Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas. Evenings only. . . . ¶ 68th St. Playhouse; through Aug. 22.)

Trust—This independent film by the young writer and director Hal Hartley ("The Unbelievable Truth") takes place entirely in a white, middle-class neighborhood in a forlorn-looking Long Island town. His Long Island is a bleak, featureless, neither-here-nor-there milieu. It's a place where anything can happen and almost nothing does—where parents and children, living together in tight quarters, torment and negotiate with each other just to create some drama for themselves. In Hartley's world, moody ex-cons and earnest high-school girls are the only really interesting people around. This picture tells the story of the strange relationship—part romance, part tutorial, part vaudeville act—between a pair of suburban losers, Matthew (Martin Donovan) and Maria (Adrienne Shelly). He's a thirtyish, chain-smoking depressive who lives with his widowed father (John MacKay). She's an adolescent bimbo who, when she announces to her family and her boyfriend that she's pregnant, discovers that this persona isn't going to be much use to her; she decides that she has to change her life. The story moves by surprising leaps, with the rhythm of the main characters' erratic, uncertain progress toward an awareness of possibilities beyond their limited, cramped experience. Hartley is alert to the absurdities of their situation; he keeps the film's tone dry, and makes the threatening, pervasive nothingness of the milieu grotesquely funny. His style is a risky blend of formal abstraction and dramatic realism, and it demands resourceful actors. Donovan has a gangling, dishevelled charm, and his bummed-out line readings are superbly timed; and Shelly brings off Maria's transformation from teen-age temptress to serious young woman with extraordinary ease. Under Hartley's direction, they seem to be inventing an acting style for a brand-new genre: the existentialist comedy of manners. Also with Merritt Nelson, Edie Falco, and Gary Sauer.—T.R. (8/12/91) (Angelika Film Center. . . . ¶ Carnegie Hall Cinema; through Aug. 20.)

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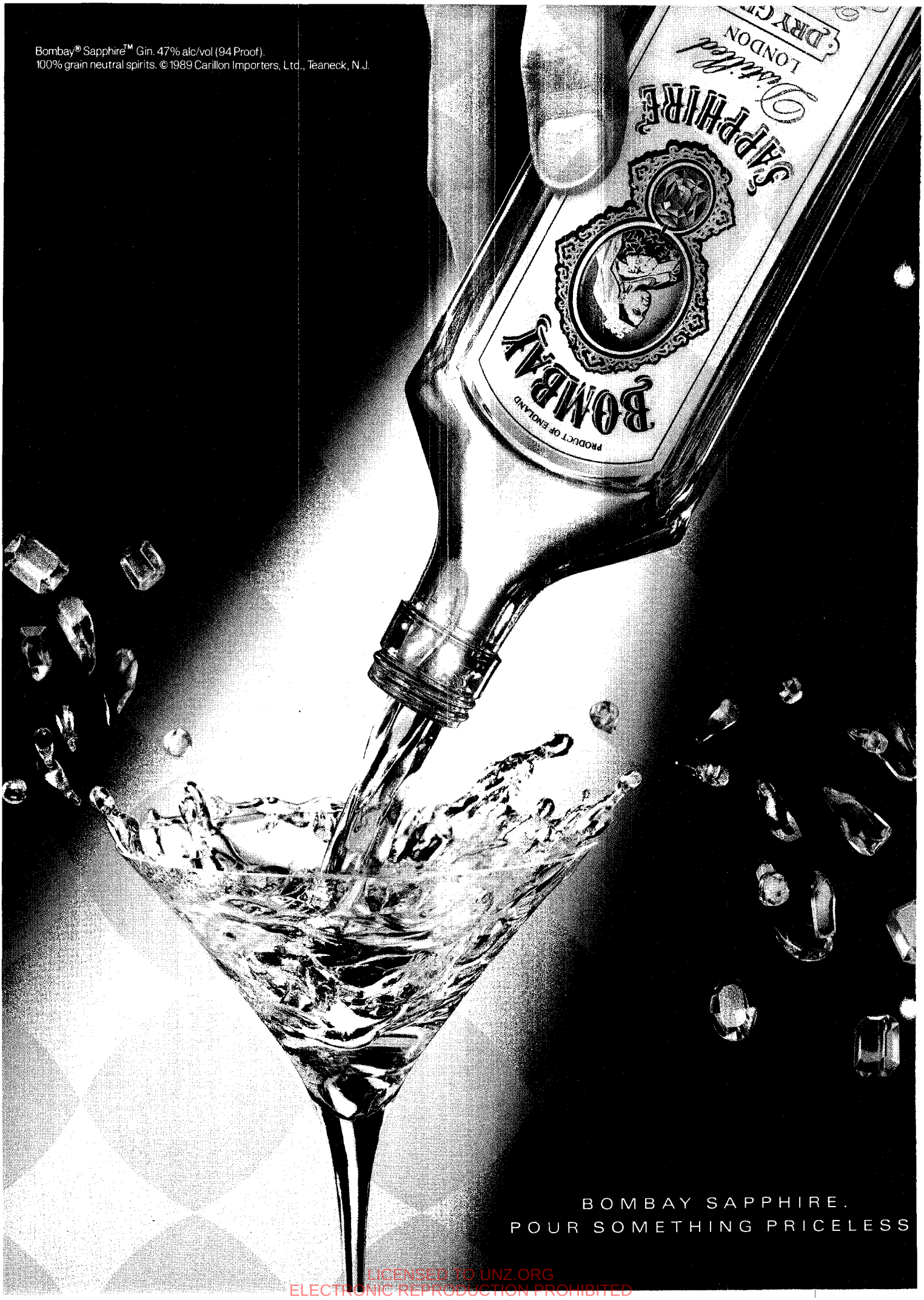
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THE NEW YORKER

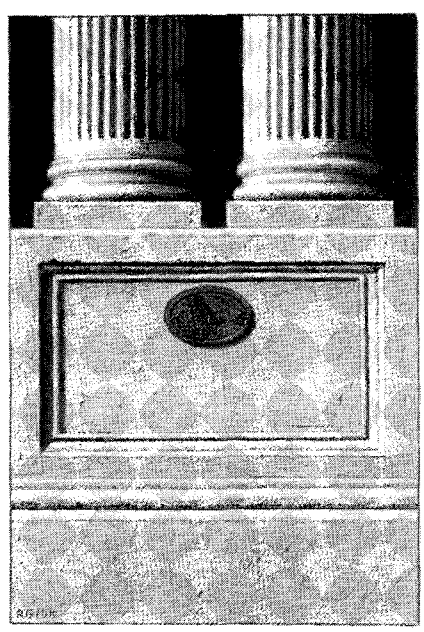
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

A FRIEND writes:

I don't suppose a lot of people remembered the anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing last month. I did, but only because this summer I've returned to the beach town in Oregon where, twenty-two years ago, I listened to the broadcast of man setting foot on what I imagined was a sandy lunar surface. I was five years old then, and I've associated going to the beach with going to outer space ever since. It's awfully difficult at five to understand much outside the little world of yourself and your family, let alone something taking place a quarter-million miles away. Yet there were a lot of older people in 1969 who had a hard time comprehending a trip to the moon. I gather from some of the magazine and newspaper accounts I've read that this was an authentic Steven Spielberg moment—rapturous faces turned upward at TV sets, and all that. And even if this particular errand into space turned out not to have been especially productive, it was a good time just the same. The guys in Houston couldn't get the ordinarily diligent Armstrong to stop taking pictures and start working; and Colonel Aldrin—the kind of goofball (his nickname is Buzz) who deserved a first shot at the moon—spent a good part of his stint bounding around like a kangaroo. Even the chance that on their return the astronauts might contaminate us with obscure diseases seems to have been fretted about mainly for the fun of it. During that week, and especially while two guys took in our planet from the moon, the Earth lived in a glow of hopefulness. Seeing pictures of our planet—small enough in all that inky blackness of space so that an astronaut from a prior Apollo mission had worried he might miss it on his way back—led some people to speculate that the moon landing might give us a healthy perspective on our problems. That hopefulness didn't last long, of course; landing a couple of people on the moon proved no antidote to our inability to treat one another right. Nevertheless, the world hasn't enjoyed such a moment of collective giddiness since.

Being able to watch all this on television, live, must have seemed as exciting and impressive as the moon landing itself, and hundreds of millions of people witnessed the two-and-a-half-hour moonwalk on TV. Oddly, this was one of the very few radio events of my life. The place where we were staying—in a village called Neskowin, about a half day's drive from our home, in Eugene—was one of those motel setups you seldom encounter anymore. Each of its units was a separate shack, and none of them had telephones or TVs. We had brought along a transistor radio, and my mother took it down from a shelf and set it on the Formica-top dining table. Staying here now, I realize that it must still have been light on the Oregon coast when Armstrong took his giant leap. The way I remember it, though, total darkness surrounded the yellow light of our tiny cottage as my three sisters and I played on the linoleum floor and our mother looked pensively out through the screen door, listening to the broadcast. There was a moment of scratchy silence, and then, when I heard the voice of an astronaut, I thought it was my father's voice. One of my older sisters said something like "That's not either him," and added that our father was a dentist, not an astronaut. Yet the voice had the reassuring weight of my father's, and when I asked why, if he wasn't on the moon, he wasn't at the beach with us, what I remember is an inflated silence within the cottage. In fact, I remember my mother wincing. It's possible, however, that I'm attributing too much drama to this particular moment—knowing, as I think I do now, the subtle gravity that rules the world of any family.



"Your father doesn't like the beach," my mother said.

The rift that the moon shot had created in my parents' marriage makes more sense to me now—now that I am married myself—than it did when I was five. My mother had told me that the moon was just like the beach, and this permitted me to feel a secret affinity with my father, who I still wanted to believe was up there, watching us. His absence could be easily explained by the assumption that he had to work. Yet the real reason he wasn't at the beach with us is obvious in retrospect: my father liked TV, and, come hell or high water, there was no way he would miss a telecast of something as big as this. Besides, he had a chance

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to spend an entire week by himself: alone in a brand-new, modern, cedar-sided house, cutting out of work, eating fast food, and observing an event he hadn't believed was possible in his lifetime. A few days after the splash-down, my father joined us at the beach, and any problems between him and my mother ebbed as inexplicably as they had risen. If this change comes off as parenthetical, that's because to me it was: I don't remember how things returned to normal—they just *were* normal again.

Nobody goes to the moon anymore, and I guess there's no point in sending someone up for the hell of it. Instead, we launch one satellite after another, to perform God only knows what, and the takeoff of a space shuttle is just an obligatory news item, it somehow seems, of almost no consequence. The reasons we go into space are as muddled now as everything else. But the first moon landing still stands out as a rare moment of clarity. When the Apollo 11 rocket blasted off, its objectives were plain and simple. The moon was a visible target, one commensurate with everyone's dreams, and, for once, our aim was true.

I like to think that putting a man on the moon was a kind of blessing we conferred on ourselves. So much of what had been on everybody's mind suddenly seemed incidental: worries evaporated, and people lived in a momentary state of grace. For centuries, mankind had wondered about the moon and projected onto it all sorts of mystical powers to affect us, and thinking about the day we might finally get there had kept us emotionally on our toes, like an intense infatuation. After the first landing, something was gone forever: that first kiss could never be repeated. For a few hours, though, mankind swooned.

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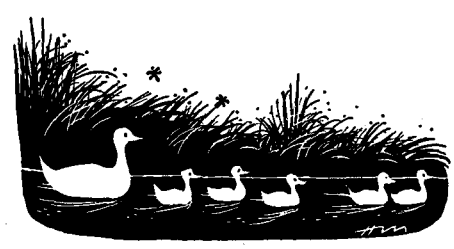
Humpty Restored

STONELEDGE, INC., a fine-art-conservation-and-restoration firm that operates in a former junior high school in Wharton, New Jersey, has rebuilt Roman armor, preserved bricks from Max Ernst's house, fixed up a tropical landscape by Frederick Edwin Church that had problems in the banana leaves, restored the pigment on more than one van Gogh, and patched up a Rothko that had been run over by a truck. Stoneledge also recently sawed pieces of gypsum wall out of the old offices of this magazine, and hauled them out to Wharton; the pieces of wall hold pencil drawings by James Thurber, and Stoneledge is making them ready for installation in our new offices. Stoneledge is a full-service outfit. It once did a restoration job on seventy-three "historic" weapons, including torpedoes and ICBM missiles, for the Picatinny Arsenal Museum. At one time, Stoneledge conservators kept on hand a supply of eagles' beaks, made of polyester resin and colored to look like granite, for Grant's Tomb. Kids would stick firecrackers in the beaks of the eagles on Grant's Tomb; Stoneledge would take care of the results.

"So many of the things we restore were never intended to last," Gordon A. Lewis, Jr., the managing director of the firm, told us in Wharton the other day. "We have imposed the word 'art' on them." He took us into a former classroom that is now called the Laboratory. Under white lights and north-facing windows, Stoneledge restorers were working on various objects. A man was arranging fragments of a foot-high Tang-dynasty ceramic horse on a foam pad, to photograph them, and a woman was cleaning a sixteenth-century majolica dish with a tiny brush. The school building, Mr. Lewis said, is made of solid poured concrete, and consequently the Laboratory is fireproof and burglar-repellent. And it doesn't vibrate. That's important, because Stoneledge uses glues that take weeks to set.

Mr. Lewis opened a steel cabinet and removed a two-handled vase with blisterlike knobs on its shoulders. It was covered with black paint. "See this jug? Know what it is?" he asked. We hadn't a clue, except that it reminded us of the kind of fern planter that you'd see on sale at Caldor. "It's an Attic vase," he said. "Sixth century B.C. It's worth three hundred thousand dollars. There are scenes under the paint. The owner bought it in good condition, and the maid broke it while she was dusting it. A friend of the owner's said, 'I can patch that,' and he glued it together and spray-painted it black, probably with Krylon paint."



The vase had been made around the time of the philosopher Heraclitus, who said, "All things flow, not one remains," and it had remained unbroken for thirty-five human lifetimes, during which the written works of Heraclitus had vanished, leaving only a hundred literary fragments, which don't fit together. Mr. Lewis was optimistic about the vase's chances. "We'll get the paint off it, and release the glue, and jig it together again," he said.

In another section of the Laboratory, a woman named Donna Bonnavent stared at a larger Tang-dynasty ceramic horse, which stood on a lazy Susan. She turned it around, examining its colors in changing light. The horse was about twelve hundred years old, and had been found shattered in a tomb in China. It was streaked with a drippy translucent glaze, in green, rust, and cream—a palette of glazes known as sancai. The pieces had been rejoined with polyester resin. Bonnavent had painted the resin areas to look like sancai glaze, and she was touching up her work. With a needle she put a tiny scratch in a painted area on the horse's neck, extending a hairline crack from the ancient network of cracks in the glaze into her own paint. "I see the green in this horse as a friend," she said. "I see the depth in it now. I've seen it in all different lights of day, and in the night."

Stoneledge uses modern materials, and leaves enough traces of its work so that a connoisseur can tell where the object has been restored. "We leave a footprint," Mr. Lewis said. "Otherwise, it would be faking." He added that Stoneledge's work is for the most part reversible, although, as he put it, "there are occasions when a restoration can't be reversed by any known methods."

Mr. Lewis told us that he was at one time the personnel director of a consulting firm, but wanted to go into the business of conserving works of art, so he persuaded a well-known conservator to take him on as a student. Among other things that Mr. Lewis learned was the difference between conservation and restoration. As he explained, "Conservation is the prevention of decay. Restoration is bringing the piece back to a semblance of its former glory."

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Lynda Zycherman, Stoneledge's director of conservation, was working on a small iron Buddha plagued with rust. Mr. Lewis began picking rust off the Buddha's chin with a bamboo meat skewer.

Ms. Zycherman said to him, "These Buddhas were churned out by the thousand in ancient factories."

"He looks better with the rust off his chin," Mr. Lewis said. "But we can always put the rust back on."

Recently, a private collector sent Stoneledge a well-known van Gogh—a landscape with flowers, Mr. Lewis told us, adding, "It was the poster painting for the van Gogh exhibition at the Musée d'Orsay." It had been cleaned not long before by another conservator, but in Lewis's opinion the conservator had gone too far. "It was overcleaned," he said. "We restored some of the glow of age. We simulated an aged varnish and put it on ten per cent of the area, mainly in the hollows below the crescendos in the impasto." The term "crescendo" is Mr. Lewis's; it describes a little point of paint, like a fillip of whipped cream, that forms at a place where the artist's brush pulls away from the canvas. "If the painting were cleaned fully, the whites in the crescendos would be as fresh as a piece of paper," Mr. Lewis said. "That's how van Gogh intended it. But there is a rule in collecting that a work of art should not be distinguished from its corpus by looking too new. One should respect the age of a piece." An appraiser estimated that the shading around the crescendos had increased the value of the van Gogh by six million dollars. "When I heard about that, I said to the owner, 'Damn! I should have charged you on the spread.' "

Mr. Lewis took us into the firm's storage room, where a wooden wall from a Spanish monastery sat on the floor in chunks—gilded columns and entablature—and he pinched off a bit of the wood. It crumbled to dust between his fingers. He picked up a pair of Sioux beaded moccasins, dating from about 1890. They were withered and twisted. "They were probably soaked in water," he said. He held up the pieces of a shattered roundel plaque made of plaster of Paris. The plaque had a bas-relief of a pair of blue wedding bells ringing above the words "On this 11th day of September, 1988, George Jones and Elaine Whitehead were joined in holy matrimony." "Elaine is an employee of ours," Mr. Lewis said. Stoneledge's experts would join the pieces with dowels, fill the break lines with resin, and paint the lines to match the plaster, while keeping a photographic record of their work, so that future conservators would know exactly what had been done to the Jones-Whitehead roundel. If the object survived for one or two thousand years, into the thirtieth or fortieth century, the word "art" might be imposed on it. The break ran across the words "What God hath joined let no man put asunder."

"Ann tells us you experimented a little with light beer in college."

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Radical

IN New York these days, there is very little that you can do if you are an enthusiastic young anarchist looking to work alongside other anarchists to actively encourage the overthrow of your government or any other. You might sit through the occasional Libertarian Book Club meeting over at the Peace Building, on Lafayette Street, and cross your fingers that the talk will be about something specifically anti-order. You might drop by Ⓐ Central, on the Lower East Side—an anarchist bookstore that was opened not long ago by some anarchists who defected from another anarchist bookstore after a dispute about how to run the place. Or you might see if there's anything vaguely anarchic going on at the local chapter of the Workers' Solidarity Alliance—an anarcho-syndicalist workers' organization that broke off from the longer-established Industrial Workers of the World a while back, when the two no longer cared to be united. Bruce Kayton, a thirty-two-year-old New York anarchist whose disposition and preferred method of overthrow are both decidedly nonviolent, generally winds up working a strike committee or two, or hanging out with an anti-war group, or doing an anti-establishment street-theatre piece, like one he put together last spring, which featured several radical actors, portraying the media, on the end of leashes held by another radical actor, portraying George Bush. These days, though, he has been having trouble finding a clean, well-organized anarchist event. "It's a very hard time historically for anarchists here," he said, in a flat accent, which he acquired growing up with a conservative Republican father and a liberal Demo-

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cratic mother in Massapequa, Long Island. "In fact, I sort of feel like I'm in the closet."

With the anarchy biz so slow, Bruce has lately begun to march out on his own: he is offering alternative walking tours of the city—tours, in loose association with the New York Marxist School, that examine the streets of New York from the anarchist's point of view. When we met him a few Sundays ago, he was wearing, along with bluejeans and running shoes, a T-shirt that said "My Country Invaded Central America and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt." He was down in the financial district, standing in the middle of Bowling Green, surrounded by a group of fifty-odd people, and explaining the theory behind his tours in a relaxed, don't-tie-me-up-with-all-your-laws way. He said, "You know, usually you go into a town, and you have your Frommer's and you go right to Trump Tower, and basically you get your rich-establishment history. I'm trying to show the other side. Sort of a what-the-people-did tour, instead of a life-styles-of-the-rich-and-famous tour. And what most people don't realize is that there has been some very, very radical, revolutionary stuff going on in the city over the centuries. Really against the order."

Bruce began by comparing the Iran-Contra scandal to the arms trades made by early Dutch settlers with warring Native American nations. Next, he walked across the street to what was once John D. Rockefeller's headquarters, the former Standard Oil Building. "We're going to go inside," Bruce said. "But what I have to say I can't say in the building. That's the difference between the regular and the radical tour. The guards are always watching me." Outside the building, Bruce talked about Upton Sinclair, his favorite novelist, and about the time Sinclair picketed Rockefeller. Inside, Bruce stood silent while a guard eyed him and the tour members, many of whom wore T-shirts displaying such slogans as "Organizing for Peace" and "The New World Order Has a Third Reich Odor," and such objects as marijuana leaves. On the way out, a woman asked Bruce where she might find information about the Great Strike of 1909—one of her all-time favorite "actions," she said. Bruce told her to go uptown to the Great Hall of Cooper Union. "There's photos of suffragettes, radical labor meetings," he said. "It's really, really excellent."

For the next two hours, Bruce criss-crossed the financial district pointing out sights of political and anarchic significance which others might have seen only as monuments to capitalism. He stopped at Trinity Church and said that it was "one of the sleaziest landlords in New York in the nineteenth century," much to the chagrin of two Trinity Church employees standing within earshot. "You see there?" Bruce asked. "The guards get a little nervous when they see me. One day, down by the Stock Exchange, they actually blocked the doors and started to reach for their guns. They were very tense and nervous." A few minutes later, he stopped in front of a McDonald's and, in a move that seemed radical even to the radicals in the group, dropped a revisionist notion about the burger chain. "Yeah, Ray Kroc really was a right-wing kind of guy," he said of the founder of McDonald's. "But his wife was pretty liberal, and when he died she donated a lot of his money to some really no-nukes causes. So you could actually make a case that eating at McDonald's is politically correct. In fact, I eat a lot of fast food. I'm not into this politically correct eating stuff."

As the tour drew to a close, the crowd began to loosen up, trading historic anecdotes, and signing petitions that several people happened to be carrying in their backpacks. At one point, the group slowed briefly while a couple debated quitting the tour to aid an injured sparrow on Water Street. Then it regained momentum, and at Battery Park, with Ellis Island as a backdrop, Bruce wrapped things up with a quick speech on immigration quotas and an argument with a tall, bearded man about the treatment of immigrants. As a sort of anti-establishment afterthought, Bruce unrolled a satirical poster that showed the Statue of Liberty as a giant Coke can with homeless people scrounging for returnable soda cans at its base. "It's great, isn't it?" he said, and everyone nodded.

"Thornton, now that the children are grown and gone let's adopt a highway."

Pretzel Talk

THE SCENE: A cloudy Wednesday morning. Union Square. Under the spreading—what kind of tree is that over there?—a blue van, stacks of white cartons, a tent. Sasha, twenty-two, wearing jeans, a jersey top, sneakers, earrings she made herself, and a tripartite apron with pockets for twenties, tens, and fives. A makeshift wooden table. Signs listing prices, types, amounts, ingredients: "Flour, Water, Yeast, Salt, Soda." At eight-forty, people are lining up. What's for sale? Pretzels. Handmade, hand-rolled, hand-twisted Pennsylvania Dutch pretzels.

"I need two dollars' worth, non-salted," a customer says.

Another customer points: "Some of these."

Sasha says, "Want to take a little taste? You like 'em like that? We have some that don't have any salt on 'em." A customer approaches, and Sasha says, "Help you?"

Customer says, "I'll just have a small bag."

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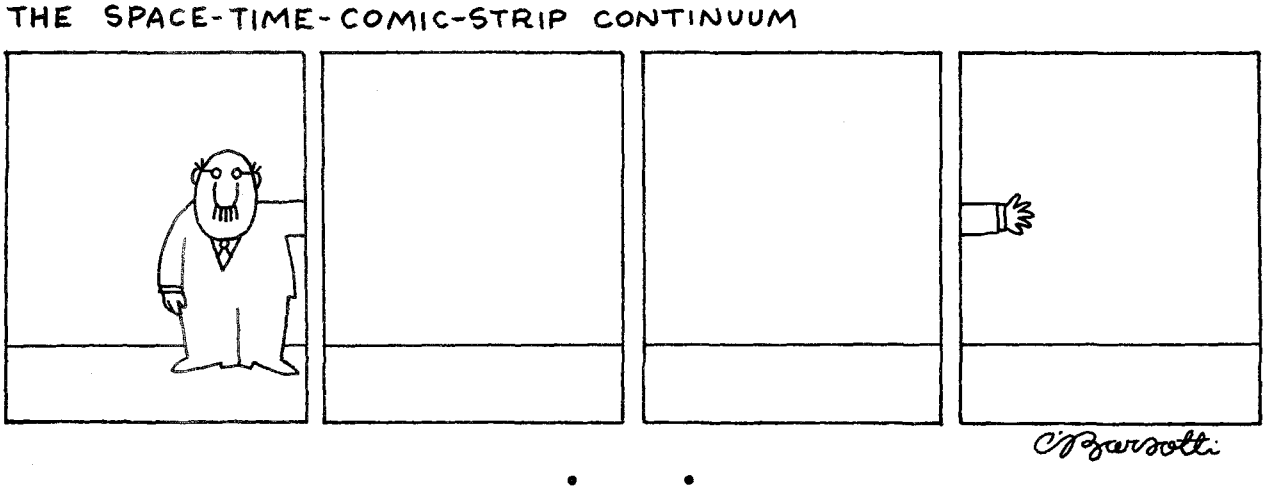

Next: "Six salt and six plain."

Sasha to a customer: "Hi."

Customer: "What're these, two dollars?"

Mixed voices: "Hi."

"Might as well."

"May I help you?"

"Two-dollar bag."

"Two out of five."

"Thanks."

"May I help you?"

"I'll take two tins."

"Five regular."

"You are? She did?"

"May I help you, please?"

THE JOB: "I get up. I have to be here by eight-thirty, usually, so I get up at seven-thirty. I ride over here on my bike. I stand here faithfully. I work till five or six, and we just sell pretzels all day, and it's fun. That's about it. I was in Scotland year before last, and I heard that there might be a job here that paid well."

Customer: "Small bag."

Sasha: "Five?"

JOB (CONTINUED): "I bag pretzels. We banter all day—discuss everything from books to politics, and from customers to what people wear. We drink a lot of coffee. When it's really hot, we drink a lot of water. Make change. Answer questions. At the end of the day, I help close up. I sweep sometimes. Do the aprons—count the money, that is. It's always interesting."

QUESTIONS: How much a bag? Do they come in a bigger bag? Are these samples? How much is this? How much is a small bag of pretzels?

THE PRODUCT: The pretzels come in clear-plastic bags, small, larger, and *large;* in red tins; and by the box. They come in the traditional shape. They come in two flavors, wheat and unbleached white, and without salt, with some salt, and with more salt. They come broken and unbroken; regular and irregular; light, darker, and *dark*. How many calories per pretzel? Fifty or sixty, Sasha says, but no fat. The customers, too, vary, but as human beings do rather than as baked goods do.

CUSTOMERS: "Eleven salted."

"Do you have any broken pretzels?"

"Do you have broken no-salted?"

"Salted regulars and whole wheat without salt."

"Make that seven."

"Hi. May I have some whole-wheat pretzels, please, without salt? With salt, I mean."

"Whole-wheat no-salt for her. I'll have whole wheat with salt."

"How about eight with salt and three no-salt and the salted ones salted lightly?"

"Can I have eleven salty ones?"

Sasha: "You mean particularly salty?"

Customer: "Yes, particularly salty."

"Some of the customers have idiosyncrasies about pretzels," Sasha says. "They want them a certain way, and we have to pick out the ones they want, you know. Salt, no-salt, dark, dark and salty, tortured: that's one customer's word—'tortured,' gnarled. Then, there are the regular customers. We know what they want. Those are the most fun. We get a lot of bus drivers—not a lot, three or four. They're very friendly. Hi, Mike. I like giving pretzels to children—they're sincerely happy when you give them a pretzel. Excuse me a minute.

"Those are broken, these are whole ones. That's a better deal.

"Oh, yes. There's, uh, the very nice customer, the very amiable customer, and the customers who want exactly what they want. Sometimes they're difficult, but we try to do what they want. Then, there are the cranky ones, and the ones who just rolled out of bed and don't know what they want. People who are in a rush. People who say that if there aren't any broken pretzels they won't buy whole pretzels, and people who don't want *any* broken, and those who'll take either/or. Some people want burned. And sometimes people say, 'Can I have bagels?' They get confused."

"Give me a dollar bag."

"Here you go."

"Thanks."

"No-salt, a dollar's worth, I guess."

"Sure."

"Salted."

"O.K."

"Thanks a lot."

"Take it easy."

"See ya."

"Two dollars' worth of no-salts."

"I need a tin refilled. Salt, a lotta salt."

"May I have two on the dark side with salt?"

"Today's slow," Sasha says. "It'll pick up at lunchtime. On the weekends, it's more crowded. On weekdays, it's steady—mostly office workers from around here, and stuff. Oh, and at the end of the day, when we're all packed up, that's when people come and plead for pretzels."

Sasha eats only two or three pretzels a day, she says, maybe four. For the record, she makes a note on the weather. "Breezy and gray," she writes, "comfortable and cool."

Customer: "Can I have a couple of bags of something—I don't know—mixed?"

Sasha: "With or without salt?"

Customer: "With salt. That make sense to you?"

Sasha: "Yeah."

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PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW THE ANSWERS

AFTER Doug Bedloe retired, he had a little trouble thinking up things to do with himself. This took him by surprise, because he was accustomed to the schoolteacher's lengthy summer vacations and he'd never found it hard to fill them. But retirement, it seemed, was another matter. There wasn't any end to it. Also, it was given more significance. Loaf around in summer, his wife would say he deserved his rest. Loaf in winter, she read it as pure laziness. "Don't you have someplace to go?" she asked him. "Lots of men join clubs or something. Couldn't you do Meals on Wheels? Volunteer at the hospital?"

Well, he tried. He approached a group at his church which worked with disadvantaged youths. Told them he had forty years' experience coaching baseball. They were delighted. First he was supposed to get some training, though—spend three Saturdays learning about the emotional ups and downs of adolescents. The second Saturday, it occurred to him that he was tired of adolescents. He'd been dealing with their ups and downs for forty years now, and the fact was they were shallow.

So then he enrolled in this night course in the modern short story. (His daughter's idea.) Figured that would not be shallow, and short stories were perfect since he never had been what you would call a speed-reader. It turned out, though, that he didn't have a knack for discussing things. You read a story; it's good or it's bad. What's to discuss? The other people in the class, they could ramble on forever. Halfway through the course, he just stopped attending.

He retreated to the basement, then. He built a toy chest for his youngest grandchild—a pretty decent effort, in fact. But carpentry didn't give him quite enough to think about. Left a kind of empty space in his mind, which all sorts of bothersome notions could rush in and fill.

Once in a while something needed fixing; that was always welcome. His wife would bring him some household object, and he would click his tongue happily. He'd ask, "What on earth did you *do* to this, Bee?"

"I just broke it, all right?" she would say. "I deliberately went and broke it. I sat up late last night plotting how to break it."

And he would shake his head, feeling gratified and important.

Such occasions didn't arise every day, though, or even every week. Not nearly often enough to keep him fully occupied.

It had been assumed that he would help out more with the grandkids, once he'd retired. These were Danny's kids, who'd moved in after their parents died. Agatha was thirteen, Thomas ten, and Daphne six—all three still young enough to need quite a lot of care. Meanwhile, Bee's arthritis had just about crippled her, and Ian, their one remaining son, had his job to go to and came home exhausted in the evenings. So Doug tried to lend a hand, but he turned out to be kind of a dunderhead. For instance, he saw the kids had tracked mud across the kitchen floor, so he fetched the mop and bucket with the very best of intentions, but next thing he knew Bee was saying, "Doug, I swan, not to sweep first! And swabbing all that dirty water around . . ." and Ian said, "Here, Dad, I'll take over." Doug yielded the mop, feeling both miffed and relieved, and put on his jacket and whistled up the dog for a walk.

He and the dog took long, long walks these days. Not long in distance but in time; Beastie was so old now she could barely creep. Probably she'd have preferred to stay home, but Doug would have felt foolish strolling the streets with no purpose. This gave him something to hang on to—her ancient, cracked leather leash, which sagged between them as she inched down the sidewalk. He could remember when she'd been a puppy and the leash had grown taut as a clothesline every time a squirrel passed.

For no good reason, he pictured what it would look like if his wife were the one walking Beastie. The two of them hunched and arthritic, a matched

set. It hurt to think of it. He had often seen such couples—aged widows and their decrepit pets. If he died, Bee would *have* to walk Beastie, at least in the daytime when the kids weren't home. But of course he was not about to die. He had always kept in shape. His hair might be gray now, but it was still there, and he could fit into trousers he'd bought thirty years ago.

A while back, though, the family doctor had told him something unsettling. He'd said, "Know what I hate? When a patient comes in and says, 'Doc, I'm here for a checkup. Next month I hit retirement age and I've planned all these great adventures.' Then, sure as shooting, I'll find he's got something terminal. It never fails."

Well, Doug had avoided *that* eventuality. He just hadn't gone for a checkup.

And anyhow, planned no great adventures.

The trouble was he was short on friends. Why had he never noticed before? It seemed he'd had so many back in high school and college.

If Danny had lived, maybe he would have been a friend.

Although Ian was nice company, too, of course.

It was just that Ian seemed—oh, less related to him, somehow. Maybe on account of that born-again business. He belonged to this hole-in-the-wall, born-again church where they called each other Sister and Brother and disapproved of alcohol and sugar and tobacco, disapproved of *fun;* and Ian at twenty-four seemed more elderly now in some ways than Doug himself. He didn't even have a girlfriend, so far as Doug knew. Or at least he'd never mentioned one. That was the thing: they didn't talk.

Danny used to talk.

WALKING Beastie past the house where all the foreign students stayed, one unseasonably mild day in February, Doug noticed someone lying face down on the roof. Good Lord, what now? They lived the strangest lives over there. This fellow was sprawled parallel to the eaves, poking some wire or electrical cord through an upstairs window. Doug paused to watch. Beastie groaned and thudded to the ground. "Need help?" Doug called.

The foreigner raised his head. In that peremptory way that foreigners

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sometimes have, he said, "Yes, please to enter the house and accept this wire."

"Oh. O.K.," Doug said.

He let Beastie's leash drop. She wasn't going anywhere.

He had been in the foreigners' house several times, because they gave a neighborhood party every Fourth of July. ("Happy your Independence Day," one of them had once said. "Happy *yours*," he'd answered before he thought.) He knew that the window in question belonged to the second-floor bathroom, and so he crossed the hall, which was totally bare of furniture, and climbed the stairs and entered the bathroom. The foreigner's face hung upside down outside the window, his thick black hair standing straight off his head so that he looked astonished. "Here!" he called.

Darned if he hadn't broken a corner out of a pane. Not a neatly drilled hole in the wood but a jagged triangle in the glass itself. A wire poked through—antenna wire, it looked like. Doug pulled on it, carefully so as not to abrade it. He reeled it in foot by foot. "O.K.," the foreigner said, and his face disappeared.

Doug hadn't thought to wonder how the man had got up on the roof in the first place. All at once he was down again, brushing off his clothes in the bathroom doorway—a good-looking, stocky young fellow in a white shirt and bluejeans. You could always tell foreigners by the way they wore their jeans, so neat and proper with the waist at the actual waistline and, in this man's case, even a crease ironed in. Jim, was that his name? No, Jim was from an earlier batch. (The foreigners came and went in rotation, with their M.D.s or their Ph.D.s or their engineering degrees.) "Frank?" Doug tried.

"Fred."

They were always so considerate about changing whatever unpronounceable names they'd been christened with. Or not christened, maybe, but . . .

"Please to tie the wire about the radiator's paw," Fred ordered.

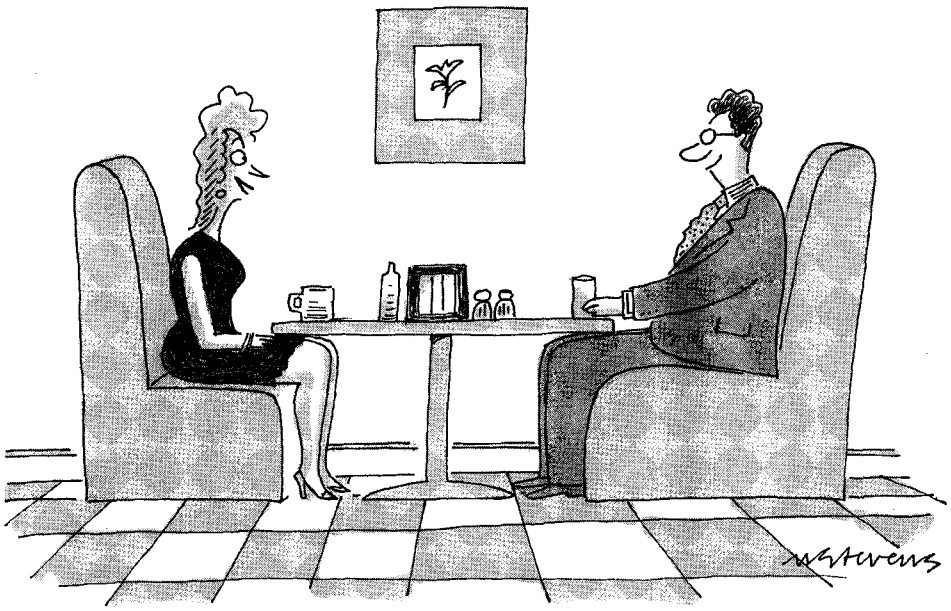
"What is it, anyhow?"

"It is aerial for my shortwave radio."

"Ah."

"I attached it to TV antenna on chimney."

"Is that safe?" Doug asked him.



"You're not at all like your answering machine."

• •

"Maybe, maybe not," Fred said cheerfully.

Doug wouldn't have worried, except these people seemed prone to disasters. Last summer, while hooking up an intercom, they had set their attic on fire. Doug wasn't sure how an intercom could start a fire, exactly. All he knew was smoke had begun billowing from the little eyebrow window on the roof, and then six or seven foreigners had sauntered out of the house and stood in the yard gazing upward, looking interested. Finally a neighbor, Mrs. Jordan, had called the Fire Department. What on earth use would they have for an intercom, anyway? she had asked Bee later. But that was how they were, the foreigners: they just loved gadgets.

Fred was walking backward now, playing out the wire as he headed across the hall. From the look of things, he planned to let it lie in the middle of the floor, where it would ambush every passerby. "You got any staples?" Doug asked, following.

"Excuse me?"

"Staples? U-shaped nails? Electrical staples, insulated," Doug went on, without a hope in this world. "You tack the wire to the baseboard so it doesn't trip folks up."

"Maybe later," Fred said vaguely, meanwhile leading the wire directly across the hall and allowing not one inch of slack.

In Fred's bedroom, gold brocade draped an Army cot. A bookcase displayed folded T-shirts, boxer shorts, and rolled socks stacked in a pyramid, like cannonballs. Doug managed to take all this in because there was nothing else to look at—not a desk or chair or bureau, not a mirror or family photo. A brown plastic radio sat on the windowsill, and Fred inserted the wire into a hole in its side.

"Looks to me like you might've brought the wire in *this* window," Doug told him.

But Fred shrugged and said, "More far to fall."

"Oh," Doug said.

Presumably, Fred was not one of the engineering students.

Fred turned on the radio, and music started playing, some Middle Eastern tune without an end or a beginning. He half closed his eyes and nodded his head to the beat.

"Well, I'd better be going," Doug said.

"You know what means these words?" Fred asked. "A young man is telling farewell to his sweetheart, he is saying to her now— "

"Gosh, Beastie must be wondering where I've got to," Doug said. "I'll just see myself out, never mind."

He had thought it would be a relief to escape the music, but after he left—after he returned home, even, and

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unsnapped Beastie's leash—the tune continued to wind through his head, blurred and wandery and mysteriously exciting.

A COUPLE of days later, the foreigners tried wiring the radio to speakers set strategically around the house. The reason Doug found out about it was that Fred came over to ask what those U-shaped nails were called again. "Staples," Doug told him, standing at the door in his slippers.

"No, no. Staples are for paper," Fred said firmly.

"But the nails are called staples, too. See, what you want is . . ." Doug said, and then he said, "Wait here. I think I may have some down in the basement."

So one thing led to another. He found the staples, he went over to help, he stayed for a beer afterward, and before long he was more or less hanging out there. They always had some harebrained project going, something he could assist with or (more often) advise them not to attempt; and because they were students, keeping students' irregular hours, he could generally count on finding at least a couple of them at home. Five were currently living there: Fred, Ray, John One, John Two, and Ollie. On weekends more arrived—fellow countrymen studying elsewhere—and some of the original five disappeared. Doug left them alone on weekends. He preferred late weekday afternoons, when the smells of spice and burnt onions had already started rising from Ollie's blackened saucepans in the kitchen and the others lolled in the living room with their beers. The living room was furnished with two webbed aluminum beach lounges, a wrought-iron lawn chair, and a box spring propped on four stacks of faded textbooks. Over the fireplace hung a wrinkled paper poster of a belly dancer drinking a Pepsi. A collapsible metal TV tray held the telephone, and the wall above it was scribbled all over with names and numbers and Middle Eastern curlicues. Doug liked that idea—that a wall could serve as a phone directory. It struck him as very practical. He would squint at the writing until it turned lacy and decorative, and then he'd take another sip of beer.

These people weren't much in the way of drinkers. They appeared to view alcohol as yet another inscrutable American convention, and they would dangle their own beers politely, forgetting them for long minutes, so Doug never had more than one. Then he'd say, "Well, back to the fray," and they would rise to see him off, thanking him once again for whatever he'd done.

At home, by comparison, everything seemed so permanent—the rooms layered over with rugs and upholstered furniture and framed pictures. The grandchildren added layers of their own; the hall was awash in cast-off jackets and schoolbooks. Bee would be in the kitchen starting supper. (How unadorned the Bedloes' suppers smelled! Plain meat, boiled vegetables, baked potatoes.) And if Ian was back from work he'd be occupied with the kids—sorting out whose night it was to set the table, arbitrating their disputes or even taking part in them as if he were a kid himself. Listen to him with Daphne, for instance. She was nagging him to find her green sweater; tomorrow was St. Patrick's Day. "Your green sweater's in the wash," he said, and that should have been the end of it—would have been if Bee had been in charge. But Daphne pressed on, wheedling. "Please? Please, Ian? They'll make fun of me if I don't wear something green."

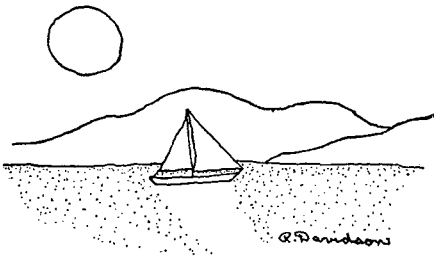
"Tell them your eyes are the something green."

"My what? My eyes? But they're blue."

"Well, if anybody points that out, put on this injured look and say, 'Oh. I've always liked to *think* of them as green.' "

"Oh, Ian," Daphne said. "You're such a silly."

He was, Doug reflected. And a sucker besides. For, sure enough, later that night he heard the washing machine start churning.



MOST days Ian took the car, but Tuesdays he caught the bus to work so Doug could drive Bee to the doctor. She had to go every single week. Doug knew that doctor's waiting room so well by now that he could see it in his dreams. A leggy, wan philodendron plant hung over the vinyl couch. A table was piled with magazines you would have to be desperate to read—densely printed journals devoted to infinitesimal research findings.

Two other doctors shared the office: a dermatologist and an ophthalmologist. One morning, Doug saw the ophthalmologist talking with a very attractive young woman at the receptionist's desk. The receptionist must have proposed some time or date, because the young woman shook her head and said, "I'm sorry, I can't make it then."

BINDWEED

Intelligence is sometimes a help.
The bindweed doesn't know
when it begins to climb a wand of grass
that this is no tree and will bend
its flourishing dependent back to earth.
But bindweed has a trick: self-
stiffening, entwining two- or three-ply,
to boost itself up, into the lilac.
Without much forethought it manages
to imitate the lilac leaves and lose
itself to all but the avidest clippers.
To spy it out, to clip near the root
and unwind the climbing tight spiral
with a motion the reverse of its own
feels like treachery—death to a plotter
whose intelligence mirrors ours, twist for twist.

—JOHN UPDIKE

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"Can't make it?" the doctor asked. "This is surgery, not a hair appointment. We're talking about your eyesight!"

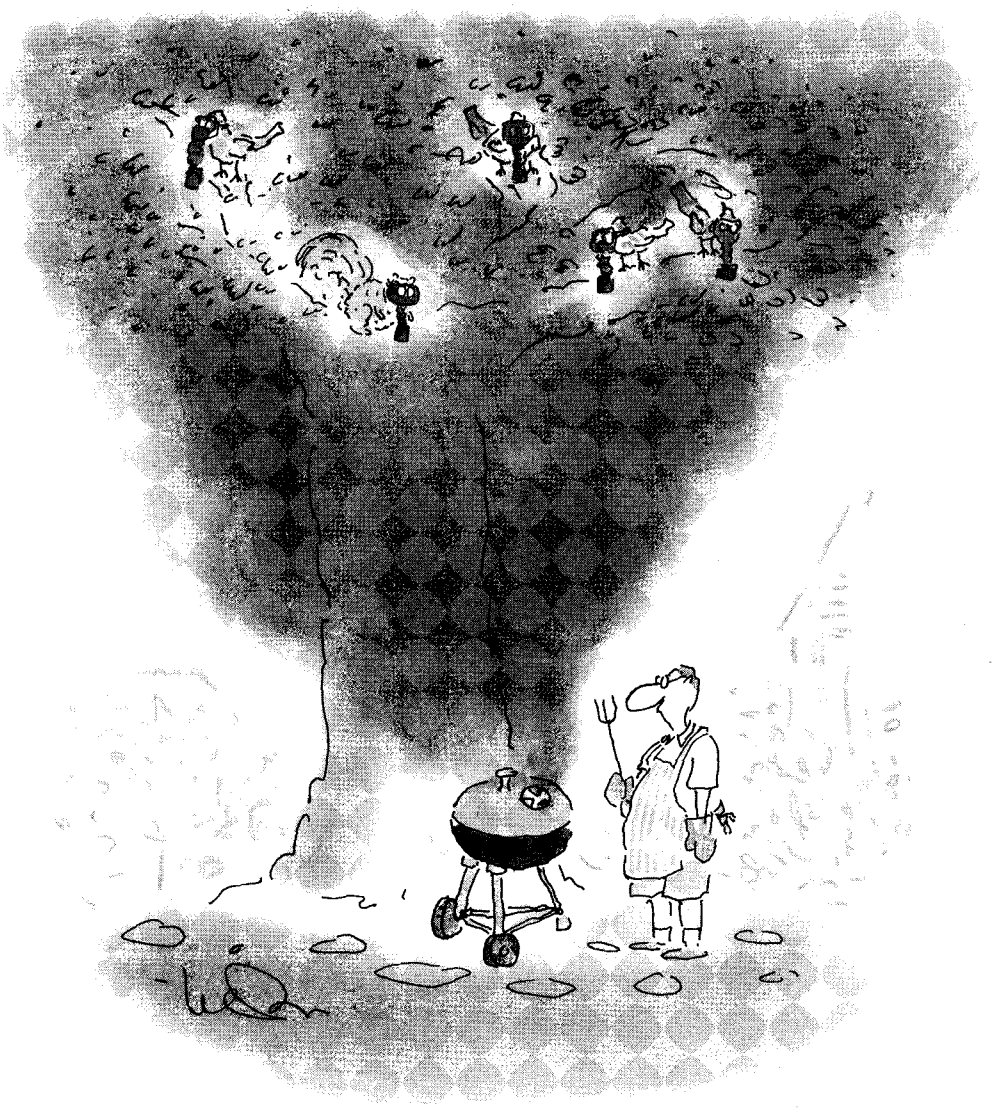
"I'm busy that day," the young woman said.

"Miss Wilson, maybe you don't understand. This is the kind of problem you take care of *now*, you take care of *yesterday*. Not next week or next month. I can't state that too strongly."

"Yes, but I happen to be occupied that day," the young woman said.

Then Bee came out of Dr. Plumm's office, and Doug didn't get to hear the end of the conversation. He kept thinking about it, though. What could make a person defer such crucial surgery? She was meeting a lover? But she could always meet him another day. She'd be fired from her job? But no employer was *that* hard-hearted. Nothing Doug came up with was sufficient explanation.

Imagine being so offhand about your eyesight. About your life, was what it amounted to. As if you wouldn't have to endure the consequences forever and ever after.



WEDNESDAY their daughter, Claudia, dropped by to help with the heavier cleaning. She breezed in around lunchtime with a casserole for supper and a pair of stretchy gloves she'd heard would magically ease arthritic fingers. "Ordinary department-store gloves—I saw this last night on the evening news," she told Bee. "You're lucky I got them when I did. I went to Hochschild's. Don't you know there'll be a big rush for them?"

"Yes, dear, that was very nice of you," Bee said dutifully. She already owned gloves, medically prescribed, much more official than these were. Still, she put the new ones on and spread her hands out as flat as possible, testing. She was wearing one of Ian's sweatshirts, and baggy slacks and slipper-socks. In the gloves, which were the dainty, white, lady's-tea kind, she looked a little bit crazy.

Claudia filled a bucket in the kitchen sink and added a shot of ammonia. "Going to tackle that chandelier," she told them. "I noticed it last week. A *disgrace!*"

Probably it was Ian's housekeeping she was so indignant with—or just time itself, time that had coated each prism with dust. She wasn't thinking of how it sounded to waltz into a person's home and announce that it was filthy. Doug cast a sideways glance at Bee to see how she was taking it. Her eyes were teary, but that could have been the ammonia. He waited till Claudia had left the kitchen, sloshing her bucket into the dining room, and then he laid a hand on top of Bee's. "Peculiar, isn't it?" he said. "First you're scolding your children and then all at once they're so smart they're scolding *you*."

Bee smiled, and he saw that they weren't real tears after all. "I suppose," he went on more lightly, "there was some stage when we were equals. I mean while she was on the rise and we were on the downslide. A stage when we were level with each other."

"Well, I must have been on the phone at the time," Bee said, and then she laughed.

Her hand in the glove felt dead to him, like his own hand after he'd slept on it wrong and cut off the circulation.

THE foreigners set their car on fire, trying to install a radio. "*I* didn't know radios were flammable," Mrs. Jordan said, watching from the Bedloes' front porch. Doug was a bit surprised himself, but then electronics had never been his strong point. He went over to see if he could help. The car was a Dodge from the late fifties or maybe early sixties, whenever it was that giant fins were all the rage. Once the body had been powder blue, but now it was mostly a deep, matte red from rust, and one door was white and one fender turquoise. Whom it belonged to was unclear, since the foreigner who had bought it, second- or thirdhand, had long since gone back to his homeland.

John Two and Fred and Ollie were standing around the car in graceful

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poses, languidly fanning their faces. The smoke appeared to be coming from the dashboard. Doug said, "Fellows? Think we should call the Fire Department?" but Fred said, "Oh, we dislike to keep disturbing them."

Hoping nothing would explode, Doug reached through the open window on the driver's side and pulled the first wire his fingers touched. Almost immediately the smoke thinned. There was a strong smell of burning rubber, but no real damage—at least none that he could see. It was hard to tell; the front seat was worn to bare springs and the back seat had been removed altogether.

"Maybe we just won't have radio," John Two told Ollie.

"We never had radio before," Fred said.

"We were very contented," John Two said, "and while we travelled we could hear the birds sing."

Doug pictured them travelling through a flat green countryside like the landscape in a child's primer. They would be the kind who set off without filling the gas tank first or checking the tire pressure, he was certain. Chances were they wouldn't even have a road map.

ONE morning when he came downstairs, he found Beastie dead on the kitchen floor, her body not yet stiff. It was a shock, although he should have been prepared for it. She was sixteen years old. He could still remember what she'd looked like when they brought her home—small enough to fit in her own feed dish. That first winter it had snowed and snowed, and she had humped her fat little body ecstatically through the drifts like a Slinky toy, with a dollop of snow icing her nose and snowflakes on her lashes.

He went upstairs to wake Ian. He wanted to get her buried before the children saw her. "Ian," he said. "Son."

Ian's room still looked so boyish. Model airplanes sat on the shelves among autographed baseballs and high-school yearbooks. The bedspread was printed with antique cars. It could have been one of those rooms that's maintained as a shrine after a young person dies.

Danny's room, on the other hand, had been redecorated for Thomas. Not a trace of Danny remained.

"Son?"

"Hmm."

"I need you to help me bury Beastie."

Ian opened his eyes. "Beastie?"

"I found her this morning in the kitchen."

Ian considered a moment and then sat up. When Doug was sure he was awake, he left the room and went downstairs for his jacket.

Beastie was not a large dog, but she weighed a lot. Doug heaved her onto the doormat and then dragged the mat outside and down the back steps. Thump, thump, thump—it made him wince. The mat left a trail in the sparkling grass. He backed up to the azalea and dropped the corners of the mat and straightened. It was six-thirty or so—too early for the neighbors to be about yet. The light was nearly colorless, the traffic noises sparse and distant.

Ian came out with his windbreaker collar turned up. He had both shovels with him. "Good thing the ground's not frozen," Doug told him.

"Right."

"This is probably not even legal, anyhow."

They chipped beneath the sod, trying their best to break it apart, and laid it to one side. A breeze was ruffling Beastie's fur, and Doug kept imagining that she could feel it, that she was aware of what they were doing. He made his mind a blank. He set up an alternating rhythm with Ian, hacking through the reddish earth and occasionally ringing against a pebble or a root. In spite of the breeze, he started sweating, and he stopped to take off his jacket, but Ian kept his on. Ian didn't look hot at all; he looked chilly and pale, with a fine white line around his lips that meant he had his jaw set. For the first time, Doug thought to wonder how this was hitting him. "Guess you'll miss her," he said.

"Yes," Ian said, still digging.

"Beastie's been around since you were—what? Eight or so, or not even that."

Ian nodded and bent to toss a rock out of the way.

"We'll let the kids set some kind of marker up," Doug told him. "Plant bulbs or something. Make it pretty."

It was all he could think of to offer.

They ended up cheating a bit on the grave—dug more of an oval than a rect-

"Tonight, we'll be eating hot dogs with a mustard-ketchup-and-pickle purée, accompanied by peas lightly sprinkled with ketchup. Then fettuccine al dente with a ketchup sauce, followed by applesauce maison with a dollop of you know what!"

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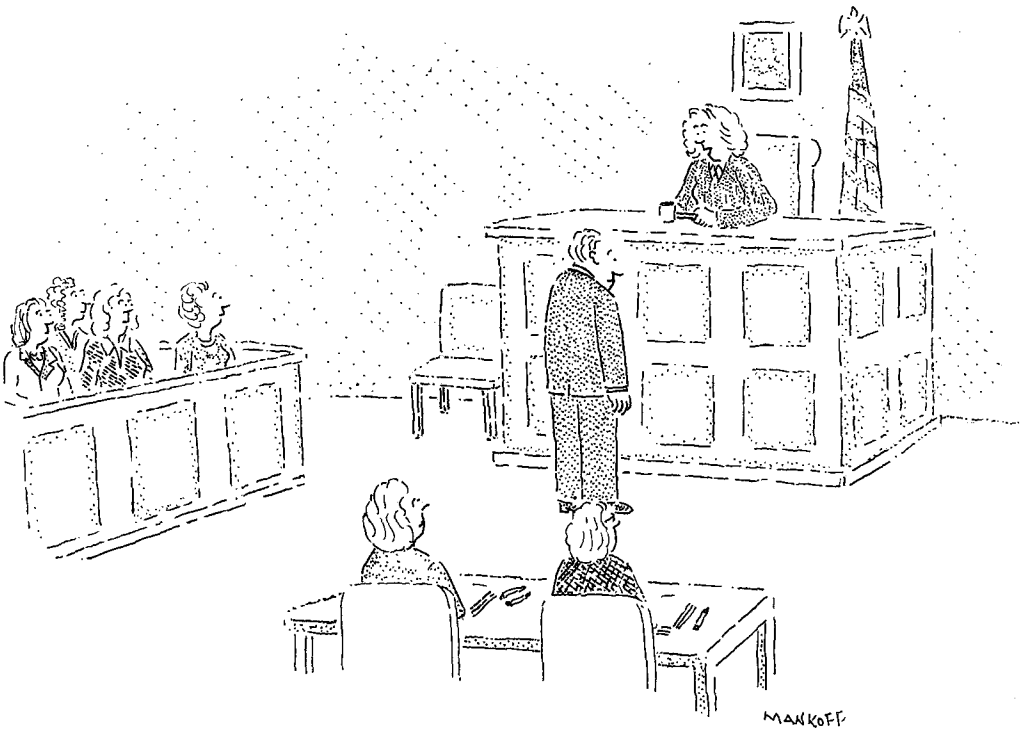
angle, so they had to maneuver to get her into it. She fit best on her side, slightly curled. When Doug saw her velvety snout against the clay, tears came to his eyes. She had always been such an undemanding dog, so accommodating, so adaptable. "Ah, God," he said, and then he looked up and realized Ian was praying. His head was bowed and his lips were moving. Doug hastily bowed his own head. He felt as if Ian were the grownup and he the child. It had been years, maybe all the years of his adulthood, since he had relied so thankfully on someone else's knowledge of what to do.



"Why won't you cuddle?"

• •

THE two younger grandchildren came down with chicken pox—first Daphne and then Thomas. (Agatha had already had it.) Daphne was hardly sick at all, but Thomas had a much worse case, and one night he woke up delirious. Doug heard his hoarse, startled voice, oddly bright in the darkness—"Don't let them come! Don't let their sharp hooves!"—and then Ian's steady "Thomas, old man. Thomas. Tom-Tom."

In that short-story course, Doug had read a story about an experiment conducted by creatures from outer space. What the creatures wanted to know was: could earthlings form emotional attachments? Or were they merely at the mercy of biology? So they cut a house in half in the middle of the night, did the same thing to another house in some totally different location, and tossed the two households together like so many game pieces. This woman woke up with a man and some children she'd never laid eyes on before. Naturally, she was terribly puzzled and upset, and the others were, too, but as it happened the children had some kind of illness, measles or something (maybe even chicken pox, come to think of it), so of course she did everything she could to make them comfortable. The creatures' conclusion, therefore, was that earthlings didn't discriminate. Their family feelings, so-called, were a matter of blind circumstance.

Doug couldn't remember now how the story had ended. Maybe that *was* the end. He couldn't quite recollect.

In the dark, Bee's special white arthritis gloves glowed eerily. She lay on her side, facing him, with the gloves curled beneath her chin. The slightest sound used to wake her when their own three children were little—a cough, or even a whimper. Now she slept through everything, and Doug was glad. It was a pity so much rested on Ian, but Ian was young. He had the energy. He hadn't yet reached the point where it just plain didn't seem worth the effort.

IAN invited his parents to a Christian Fellowship Picnic. "To a what?" Doug asked, stalling for time. (Who cared what it was called? It was bound to be something embarrassing.)

"Each of us invites people we'd like to join in fellowship with," Ian said in that deadly earnest way he had. "People who aren't members of our congregation."

"I thought that church of yours didn't believe in twisting folks's arms."

"It doesn't. We don't. This is only for fellowship."

They were watching the evening news—Doug, Bee, and Ian. Now Bee looked away from a skyful of bomber airplanes to say, "I've never understood what people mean by 'fellowship.' "

"Just getting together, Mom. Nothing very mysterious."

"Then why even say it? Why not say 'getting together'?"

Ian didn't take offense. He said, "Reverend Emmett wants us to ask, oh, people we care about and people who wonder what we believe and people who might feel hostile to us."

"We're not hostile!"

"Then maybe you would qualify for one of the other groups," Ian said mildly.

Bee looked at Doug. Doug pulled himself together (he had a sense of struggling toward the surface) and said, "Isn't it sort of early for a picnic? We're still getting frost at night!"

"This is an indoor picnic," Ian told him.

"Then what's the point?"

"Reverend Emmett's mother, Sister Priscilla, has relatives out in the valley who own a horse farm. They're in Jamaica for two weeks and they told her she could stay in the house."

"Did they say she could throw a church picnic in the house?"

"We won't do any harm."

Bee was still looking at Doug. (She

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wanted him to say no, of course.) The bombers had given way to a moisturizer commercial.

"Well, it's nice of you to think of us, son," Doug said, "but— "

"I've invited Mrs. Jordan, too."

"Mrs. Jordan?"

"Right."

"*Jessie* Jordan?"

"She's always wanting to know what Second Chance is all about."

This put a whole different light on things. How could they refuse when a mere neighbor had accepted? Drat Jessie Jordan, with her lone-woman eagerness to go anywhere she was asked!

And then she had the nerve to make out she was being so daring, so rakish. On the way to Greenspring Valley (for they did end up attending, taking their own car, which was easier on Bee's hips than the bus), Mrs. Jordan bounced and burbled like a six-year-old. "Isn't this exciting?" she said. She was dressed as if headed for a Buckingham Palace garden party—cartwheel hat ringed with flowers, swishy silk dress beneath her drab winter coat. "You know, there are so many alternative religions springing up these days," she said. "I worry I'll fall hopelessly behind."

"And wouldn't *that* be a shame," Bee said sourly. She wore an ordinary gray sweatsuit, not her snazzy warm-up suit with the complicated zippers; so her hands must be giving her trouble today. Doug himself was dressed as if for golfing, carefully color-coördinated to compensate for what might be misread as sloppiness on Bee's part. He kept the car close behind Second Chance's rented bus. Sometimes Daphne's little thumbtack of a face bobbed up in the bus's rear window, smiling hugely and mouthing elaborate messages no one could catch. "*What* did she say? What?" Bee asked irritably.

"Can't quite make it out, hon."

They travelled deeper and deeper into country that would be luxurious in the summer but was now a vast network of bare branches lightly tinged with green. Pasturelands extended for miles. The driveway they finally turned into was too long to see to the end of, and the white stone house was larger than some hotels. "Oh! Would you look!" Mrs. Jordan cried, clapping her hands.

Doug didn't like to admit it, but he felt easier about Second Chance now that he saw such a substantial piece of property connected to it. He wondered if the relatives were members themselves. Probably not, though.

They parked on the paved circle in front. Passengers poured from the bus—first the children, then the grownups. Doug fancied he could tell the members from the visitors. The members had a dowdy, worn, slumping look; the visitors were dressier and full of determined gaiety.

It occurred to him that Bee could be mistaken for a member.

Carrying baskets, coolers, and thermos jugs, everyone followed Reverend Emmett's mother up the flagstone walk. They entered the front hall, with its slate floor and center staircase, and several people said, "Ooh!"

"Quite a joint," Doug murmured to Bee.

Bee hushed him with a look.

They crossed velvety rugs and gleaming parquet and finally arrived at an enormous sun porch with a long table in its center and modern, high-gloss chairs and lounges set all about. "The conservatory," Reverend Emmett's mother said grandly. She was a small, finicky woman in a sweater set and a string of pearls and a pair of chunky jeans that seemed incongruous, downright wrong, as if she'd forgotten to change into the bottom half of her outfit. "Let's spread our picnic," she said. "Emmett, did you bring the tablecloth?"

"I thought you were bringing that."

"Well, never mind. Just put my potato salad here at this end."

Reverend Emmett wore a sporty polo shirt, a tan windbreaker, and black dress trousers. (He and his mother belonged in Daphne's block set, the one in which you mismatched heads and legs and torsos.) He put a covered bowl where his mother directed, and then the others laid out platters of fried chicken, tubs of coleslaw, and loaves of home-baked bread. The table—varnished so heavily that it seemed wet—gradually disappeared. Streaky squares of sunlight from at least a dozen windows warmed the room, and people started shedding their coats and jackets. "Dear Lord in Heaven," Reverend Emmett said (Doug was caught with one arm half out of a sleeve), "the meal

"A little less West Coast this time, Eddie."

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is a bountiful gift from Your hands, and the company is more so. We thank You for this joyous celebration. Amen."

It was true, there was something joyous in the atmosphere. Everyone converged upon the food, clucking and exclaiming. The children turned wild. Even Agatha, ponderously casual in a ski sweater and stirrup pants, pushed a boy back with shy enthusiasm when he gave her a playful nudge at the punch bowl. The members steered the guests magnanimously toward the choice dishes; they took on a proprietary air as they pointed out particular features of the house. "Notice the leaded panes," they said, as if they themselves were intimately familiar with them. The guests (most as suspicious as Doug and Bee, no doubt) showed signs of thawing. "Why, this is not bad," one silver-haired man said—the father, Doug guessed, of the hippie-type girl at his elbow.

Doug had hold of too much dinner to shake hands, but he nodded at the man and said, "How do. Doug Bedloe."

"Mac McClintock," the man said. "You just visiting?"

"Right."

"His son is Brother Ian," the hippie told her father. "I just think Brother Ian is so faithful," she said to Doug.

"Well . . . thanks."

"My daughter, Gracie," Mac said. "Have you met?"

"No, I don't believe we have."

"We've met!" Gracie said. "I'm the one who fetched your grandchildren from school every day when your wife was in the hospital."

"Oh, yes," Doug said. He didn't have the faintest memory of it.

"I fetched the children for Brother Ian, and then Brother Ian closed up the ratholes in my apartment."

"Really," Doug said.

"My daughter lives in a slum," Mac told him.

"Now, Daddy."

"She makes less money than I made during the Depression and then she gives it all to this Church of the Second Rate."

"Second Chance! And I do not; I tithe. I don't have to do even that if I don't want to. It's all in secret; we don't believe in public collection. You act like they're defrauding me or something."

"They're a church, aren't they? A church'll take its people for whatever it can get," Mac said. He glanced at Doug. "Hope that doesn't offend you."

"Me? No, no."

"Want to hear what I hate most about churches? They think they know the answers. I really hate that. It's the people who *don't* know the answers who are going to Heaven, I tell you."

"But!" his daughter said. "The minute you say that, you see, you yourself become a person who knows the answers."

Mac gave Doug an exasperated look and chomped into a drumstick.

Bee was sitting on a chaise longue with her legs stretched out, sharing a plate with Daphne. Bee was the only guest who seemed to have remained outside the gathering. Everyone else was laughing, growing loose, circulating from group to group in a giddy, almost tipsy way. (Although, of course, there wasn't a bit of alcohol, just that insipid fruit punch.) Reverend Emmett was holding forth on his inspiration for this picnic. "I felt led," he told a circle of women. He had the breathless look of an athlete being interviewed after a triumph. "I was listening to one of our brothers a couple of weeks ago; he said he wished he could share his salvation with his parents, except they never would agree to come to services. And all at once I felt led to say, 'Why should it be services? Why not a picnic?' "

The women smiled and nodded and their glasses flashed. (One of them was Jessie Jordan, looking thrilled.) An extremely fat young woman threaded her way through the crowd with a plastic garbage bag, saying, "Plates? Cups? Keep your forks, though. Dessert is on its way."

What could they serve for dessert if they didn't believe in sugar? Fruit salad, it turned out, in little foil dishes. Thomas carried one of the trays around. When he came to Doug he said, "Grandpa? Are you having a good time?"

"Oh, yes."

"Are you making any friends?"

"Certainly," Doug said, and he felt a sudden wrench for the boy's thin, anxious face, with its dots of old chicken-pox scars. He took a step closer to Mac

"It's up to you now, Miller. The only thing that can save us is an accounting breakthrough."

• •

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AFTER REREADING "NOTES OF A NATIVE SON"

I stood on the mattress,
stepped over my husband as he slept,
and made my way through the dark house,
picking up a beer, a cigarette,
and a pack of matches in the kitchen.
I went down the dark stairs
to the open window, its plastic cover
crackling in the August breeze.
I pushed it aside (it made the sound
of a tent flap)
and stepped onto the little wooden deck
which floats a story above the lawns.
The beer had been around for months,
and the cigarettes had been stowed
in the drawer for a year.
Everything tasted just as stale
as it should. The wind whistled
in the neck of the beer bottle,
the smoke wavered and stretched
like the cartoon image of ghosts,
and the midnight air of a Saturday night
felt colder than I thought it would.
I sat on a damp chair
and put my feet on the low table.
One light was on
in the apartment house opposite;
it was a window I had never seen lit.
A black man stood facing me,
laying out a pair of trousers
on his ironing board. After
smoothing them down, he picked up the iron
and began his work. He was studied
and intent at his task,
which he repeated, to my amazement,
garment after garment. The tool
of the iron, its palm facing me during repose
like the fake "Indian" greeting "How,"
seemed serene and historical,
like a printing press or loom,
and the man's industry was gorgeous
in silence, in the spotlit apartment window.
From the dark valley of back yards
I half expected his framed silhouette
would answer my questions,
the way the moon
responds to a graceless landscape,
but my husband and I—
we had an argument that kept me
from sleeping—
will still disagree in the morning.
I smoked, and sipped my beer.
From the pendulous, dedicated
sweep of his arm, from its repetitions,
from the moment he took to assess his work
and move on, from his near-
isolation, the rage
behind this composition—
myself and the man in Baldwin's wake,
ironing, and my husband, upstairs,
in sleep's even stitches—
gave way to observation:
the agitated sleeper is drawn outside,
to blow smoke into the folds of wind
and consider the renowned essay
of mind and soul.
Then she's sent back in
to the bed she shares, to the cloth
curtain fluttering above
the cloth blanket,
to the essential work of marrying
acceptance and argument.

—JESSICA GREENBAUM

• •

McClintock, although they'd run out of small talk some minutes ago.

The women were clearing the table now, debating leftovers.

"It seems a shame to throw all this out."

"Won't you take it home?"

"No, you."

"Law, I couldn't eat it in a month of Sundays."

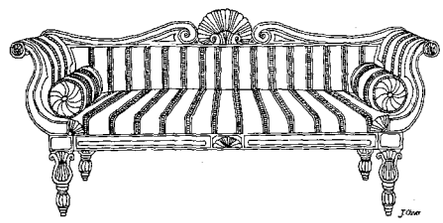
"We wouldn't want to waste it, though."

Reverend Emmett's mother said, "Mr. Bedloe, we all think so highly of Brother Ian."

"Thank you," Doug said. This was starting to remind him of Parents' Night at elementary school. He swallowed a chunk of canned pineapple, which surely contained sugar, didn't it? "And you must be very proud of your son," he added.

"Yes, I am," she said. "I look around me and I see so many people, so many redeemed people, and I think, 'If not for Emmett, what would they be doing?' "

What *would* they be doing? Most would be fine, Doug supposed—his own son among them. Lord, yes. But in all fairness he supposed this church met a real need for some. So he looked around, too, following Sister What's-Her-Name's eyes. What he saw, though, was not what he had expected. Instead of the festive throng he had



been watching a few minutes ago, he saw a spreading circle of stillness that radiated from the table and extended now even to the children, so that a cluster of little girls in one corner allowed their jacks ball to die, and the boys gave up their violent ride in the glider. Even Bee seemed stunned, an orange section poised halfway to her parted lips.

"It's the table," a woman told Reverend Emmett's mother.

"The . . . ?"

"Something's damaged the surface."

Reverend Emmett's mother thrust her way through the circle of women, actually shoving one aside. Doug craned to see what they were talking about. The table was bare now and even shinier than before; someone had wiped it with a damp cloth. It looked perfect at first glance, but when he tilted his

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head to let the light slant differently he saw that the shine was marred at one end by several distinct, unshiny rings.

"Oh, *no*," Reverend Emmett's mother breathed.

Everyone started speaking at once: "Try mayonnaise."

"Try toothpaste."

"Rub it down with butter."

"Quiet! Please!" Reverend Emmett's mother said. She closed her eyes and pressed both hands to her temples.

Reverend Emmett stood near Doug, peering over the others' heads. (Above the collar of his jaunty polo shirt, his neck looked scrawny and pathetic.) "Perhaps," he said, "if we attempted to—"

"Shut up and let me *think*, Emmett!"

Silence.

"Maybe if I came back tomorrow," she said finally, "with that cunning little man from Marx Antiques, the one who restores old. . . He could strip it and refinish it. Don't you suppose? But the owners are due home Tuesday, and if he has to strip the whole . . . but never mind! I'll tell him to work round the clock! Or I'll ask if . . ."

More silence.

Ian said, "Was it soaped?"

Everyone turned and looked for him. It took a minute to find him; he was standing at the far end of the room.

"Seems to me the finish is some kind of polyurethane," he said, "and if those rings are grease, well, a little soap won't do any harm, and it might even—"

"Soap! Yes!" Reverend Emmett's mother said.

She went to the kitchen herself. While she was gone, the fat young woman told Doug, "Brother Ian works with wood every day, you know."

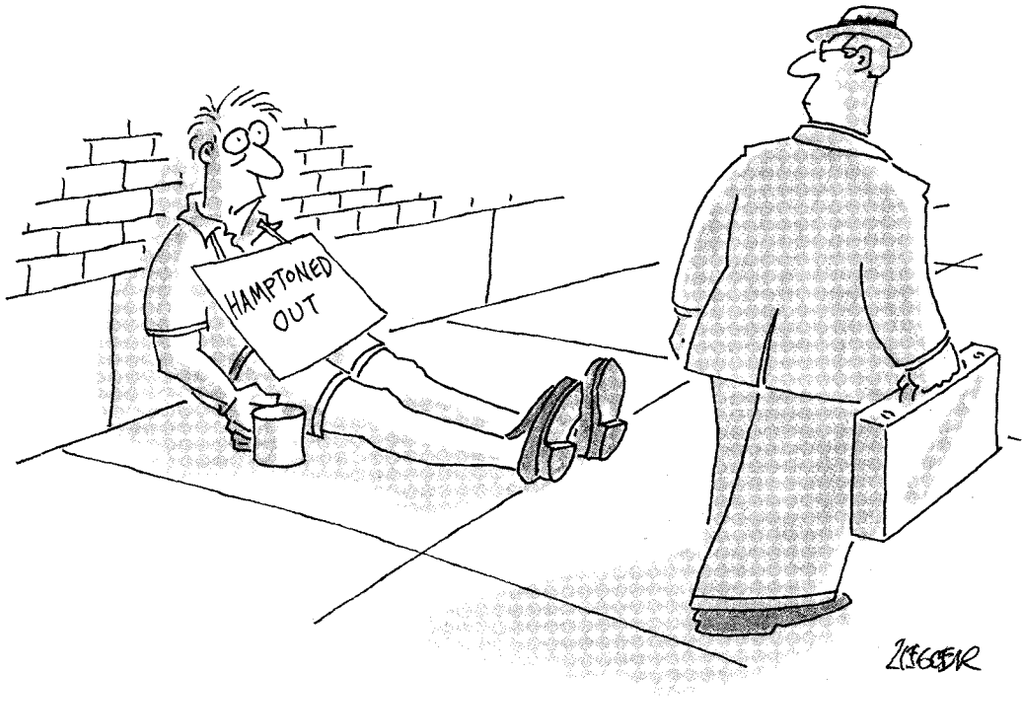
"Yes, I'm his father," Doug said.

She said, "Are you really!"

Reverend Emmett's mother came back. She held a sponge and a bottle of liquid detergent. They parted to let her through, and she approached the table and bent over it. Doug was too far away to see what she did next, but he heard the sighs of relief. "Now dry it off," someone suggested.

A woman whipped a paisley scarf from her neck and offered that, and it was accepted.

"Perfect," someone said.



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This time, when he craned, Doug saw that the rings had vanished.

Right away the congregation started packing, collecting coats and baskets. Maybe they would have anyhow, but Doug thought he detected a sort of letdown in the general mood. People filed out meekly, not glancing back at the house as they left it. (Doug imagined the house thinking, Goodness, what was all *that* about?) They crossed the columned front porch with their heads lowered. Doug helped Bee into the car. "Coming?" he asked Mrs. Jordan.

"Oh, I'm going to ride in the bus," she said. She alone seemed undampened. "Wasn't Ian the hero, though!"

"Sure thing," Doug said.

He watched her set off for the bus with one hand clamping down her cartwheel hat.

Driving home, he made no attempt to stay with the others. He left the bus behind on the Beltway and breezed eastward at a speed well above the legal limit. "So now we've been to a Christian Fellowship Picnic," he told Bee.

"Yes," she said.

"I wonder if it'll become a yearly event."

"Probably," she said.

Then she started talking about Danny. How did she get from the picnic to Danny? No telling. She started kneading the knuckles of her right hand, the hand that looked more swollen, and she said, "Sometimes I have the strangest feeling. I give this start and I think, 'Why!' I think, 'Why, here we are! Just going about our business the same as usual!' And yet so much has changed. Danny is gone—our golden boy, our first baby boy that we were so proud of—and Ian is a whole different person, and Claudia's so bustling now, and our lives have turned so makeshift and second class, so second string, so second fiddle, and everything's been lost. Isn't it amazing that we keep on going? That we keep on shopping for clothes and getting hungry and laughing at jokes on TV? When our oldest son is dead and gone, and we'll never see him again, and our life's in ruins!"

"Now, sweetie," he said.

"We've had such extraordinary troubles," she said, "and somehow they've turned us ordinary. That's what's so hard to figure. We're not a special family anymore."

"Why, sweetie, of course we're special," he said.

"We've turned uncertain. We've turned into worriers."

"Bee, sweetie."

"Isn't it amazing?"

It was astounding, if he thought about it. But he was careful not to.

THE weather began to grow warmer, and Doug raised all the windows and lugged the summer clothes

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down from the attic for Bee. Across the street, the foreigners came out in their shirtsleeves to install an electric garage-door opener they'd ordered from a catalogue. Doug found this amusing. A door that opened on its own, for a car that could barely *move* on its own! Of course he kept them company while they worked, but the door in question was solid wood and very heavy, potentially lethal, and he'd just as soon not be standing under it when calamity struck. He stayed several feet away, watching Ollie teeter on a kitchen chair as he screwed something to a rafter overhead. Then, when Doug got bored, he ambled inside with the two who were less mechanically inclined, leaving Ollie and Fred and John Two to carry on. He refused a beer (it was ten in the morning) but accepted a seat by the window, where a light breeze stirred the tattered paper shade.

From here the garage was invisible, since it lay even with the front of the house, but he could see Fred standing in the drive with the push-button control in both hands, pressing hard and then harder. Doug grinned. Fred leaned forward, his face a mask of straining muscle, and he bore down on the button with all his might. You didn't have to set eyes on the door to know it wasn't reacting. Meanwhile, Ollie walked out to the street and climbed into the car and started the engine, and John Two removed a brick from under the left rear wheel. Optimistic of them; Doug foresaw a good deal more work before the garage would be ready for an occupant. Through the open window he heard the croupy putt-putt as the car turned in and rolled up the drive and sat idling. "In another catalogue," John One was saying, "we have seen remarkable invention: automatic yard lights! That illuminate when dark falls! We plan to send away for them immediately."

"I can hardly wait," Doug said, and then he twisted in his chair because he thought he noticed someone emerging from his own house, but it was only shrubbery stirring in the breeze.

He was a touch nearsighted, and the mesh of the window screen seemed more distinct to him than what lay beyond it. What lay beyond it—home—had the blocky, blurred appearance of something worked in needlepoint, each tiny square in the screen filled with a square of color. There was not only a needlepoint house but also a needlepoint car out front, a needlepoint swing on the porch, a needlepoint bicycle in the yard. His entire little world: a cozy, old-fashioned sampler stitched in place forever.

The best thing about the foreigners, he decided, was how they thought living in America was a story they were reading, or a movie they were watching. It was happening to someone else; it wasn't theirs. Good Lord, not even their names were theirs. Here they spoke lines invented by other people, not genuine language—not the language that simply is, with no need for translation. Here they wore blue denim costumes and inhabited a Hollywood set complete with make-believe furniture. But when they went back home, there they'd behave as seriously as anyone. They would fall in love and marry and have children, and they'd agonize over their children's problems, and struggle to get ahead, and practice their professions soberly and efficiently. What Doug was witnessing was only a brief holiday from their real lives.

He was pleased by this notion. He thought he'd examine it further later on—consider, say, what happened to those foreigners who ended up not going home. The holiday couldn't last forever, could it? Was there a certain moment when the movie set turned solid? But for now, he didn't bother himself with all that. He was happy just to sit here, letting some of their time-out rub off on him.

Then Ollie turned toward the house and called, "Come see!" and, for courtesy's sake, Doug rose and followed Ray and John One to the yard. Other neighbors were here, too, he realized. It looked like a party. He joined them and stood squinting in the sunshine, smiling at the foreigners' car, which sat half inside the garage and half out, like a crumpled beer can, with the door bisecting it neatly across the middle.

—Anne Tyler

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ANNALS OF PLACE

IN THE NORTHWEST

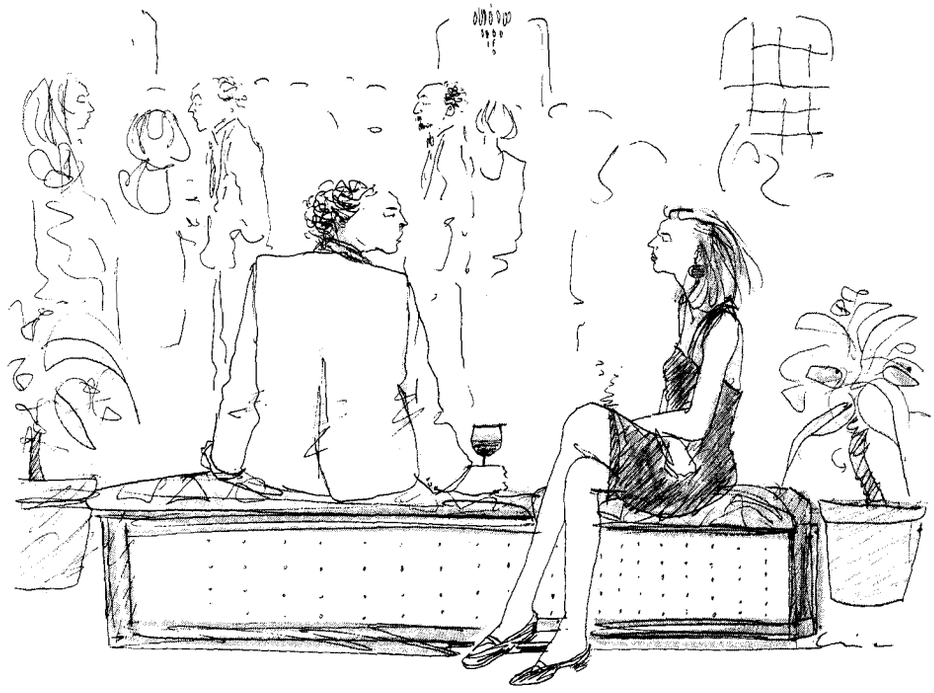
THE Columbia River is the largest river in the Western Hemisphere to empty into the Pacific Ocean, hitting the sea with such force that fresh water pours from its mouth several miles out to sea. The Columbia is over twelve hundred miles long and often over a mile wide; its waters drain an area almost as big as the state of Texas. More than any other landmark, this river ties the Northwest together: it rises in British Columbia and drains the states of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon, crossing desert, high plains, wheatland, cattle land, grassland, through the remnants of the glaciers and the volcanic age, between buttes and forests, into the sea. The first European to discover the Columbia River was the Spanish navigator Bruno de Hezeta, in 1775—at least, his journal entries indicate that he knew he'd found a large river or bay. But he either couldn't or wouldn't cross the river's bar. His men were weak from scurvy, and Hezeta himself was in a hurry: he was looking for the Northwest Passage.

For centuries, maps had shown the Northwest Passage splitting the North American continent from coast to coast. Ships searched for its eastern outlet for a long time without luck, but somehow failure made the Passage seem even more real: of course it was hidden; of course it would be hard to find. The discovery of the cities of the Incas and the Aztecs gave impetus to the search; the Passage became more than a waterway—it became a waterway to temples of gold. It should not be surprising, then, that people found the Northwest Passage. Reports of its existence circulated through Europe as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century. Anonymous sailors told all who would listen of long channels up into paradisiacal lands. It was a wish made real by the fervor of the wishing.

By the late eighteenth century, the dream of the Northwest Passage had become somewhat less fabulous. Now explorers spoke of the Great River—a channel rising not from the Atlantic but from the Great Lakes. Just as the Northwest Passage had been there, the Great River was there, running through massive forests in the core of a continent, hidden under trees. It was called, variously, the River Buonaventura, the River of the West, and (thanks to William Cullen Bryant's "Thanatopsis") the River Oregon. The American shipmaster and explorer Robert Gray passed the mouth of the Columbia—this nearest thing to a Great River the West holds—in May, 1792, in his ship, the Columbia Rediviva. He passed, but something made him turn around. Perhaps he thought a new source of fur might lie up that rough water. He waited for hours, until the right combination of waves and current and wind came, and then he entered. Near what is now Chinook, Washington, a crowd of Indians watched curiously as Gray's great sailing ship crossed the bar.

To the first explorers, the Columbia River seemed virtually impassable. It was crisscrossed with rapids and sandbars that ships could not traverse. It was nothing like a passage at all. Below Celilo Falls, wide, terraced cataracts some two hundred miles upriver, the Columbia had to pass through a canyon so narrow that it was described as a river set on its edge. Celilo, with its spray and tumble, was the Indians' best fishing ground. But Lewis and Clark were critical: William Clark wrote of "this agitated gut, this bad whorl & Suck . . . swelling, boiling & whorling in every direction." Lewis and Clark were travelling downriver in the fall of 1805—the first white men to do so. They marched the portage and tossed in their canoes, to the entertainment of the Indians, whom they considered "badly clad and illy made," but who were nevertheless used to the lethal rapids. "The whorls and swills arriseing from the Compression of the water," Clark wrote, were "forming & boiling in a most horriable manner." After a fitful sleep a few nights later, near the confluence of the Columbia and the Willamette, Clark was petulant about the flocks of wild birds: "They were emensely noumerous, and their noise horid." The whole of the lower Columbia got on the tired travellers' nerves.

Celilo Falls, once a layered white cascade of foam and salmon, is drowned today in the backwash of a dam. Today, there are eleven dams on the Columbia, and no rapids. Of its twelve hundred miles, only about fifty are free-



"What's wrong with one hundred per cent attention twenty per cent of the time?"

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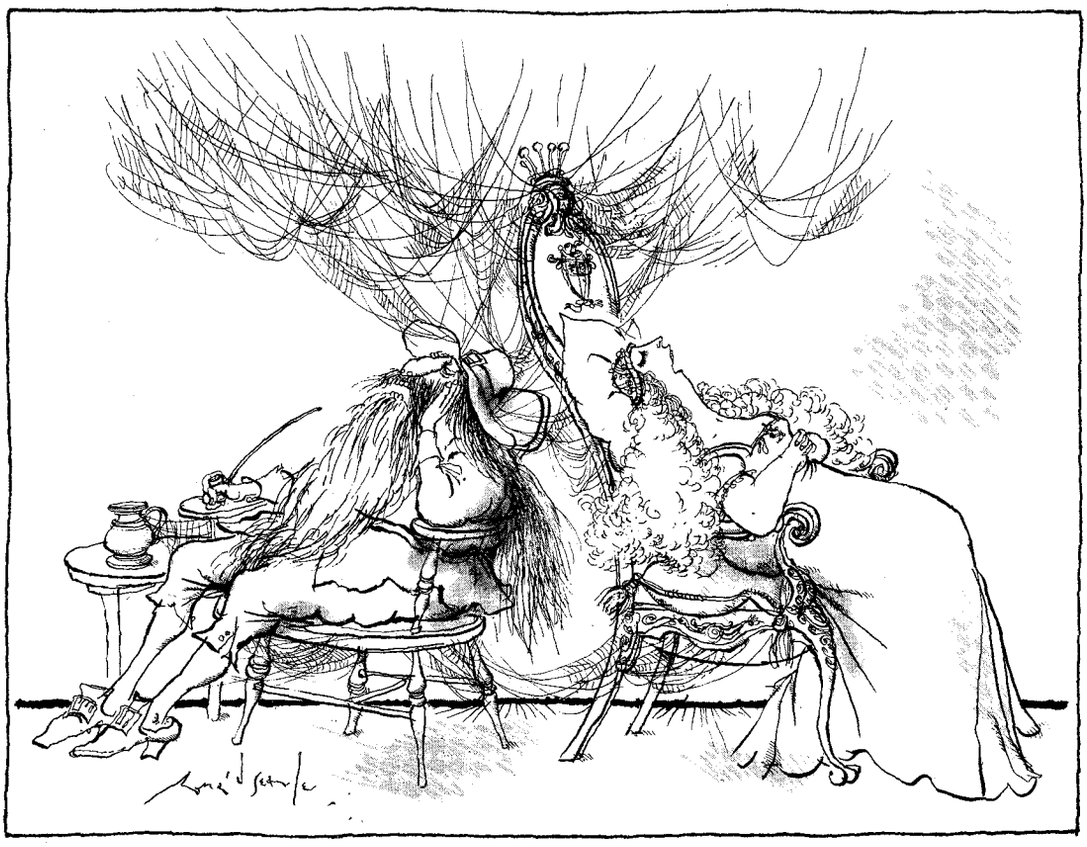

CROSSED PATHS

Rip van Winkle Meets Sleeping Beauty

• •

flowing. Dredges gouge the river all year round to clear a channel deep enough for oceangoing ships. When I drive up and down beside the Columbia River now, I might be driving along another river altogether. Just north of the Oregon border, where the placid Snake River empties into the Columbia, the water spreads wide and deep as a lake. On either side are hills, with sagebrush blooming dark golden, the color of copper and saffron. I count row upon row of buttes, pale-blue and gray walls in the afternoon haze, first piled with rocks and then following the river down into a gorge studded with trees. On both sides of the gorge, long trains go by, and grain barges and sawdust barges move through the water. More than seventy trucks a day travel up the narrow highway on the south side, hauling garbage away from Portland and Seattle.

As I drive west, out of dry wheatland toward the sea, the river narrows, and the buttes rise into cliffs. The water is gleaming, steady and calm in its size; at Hood River, Windsurfers skim the tiny whitecaps. One tall, trailing waterfall after another shoots out and down hundreds of feet into the river, the surprised leap of a stream with its bed cut off by ancient floods. Toward Portland, there are Jet Skis, and boats of every kind: catamarans and sloops tacking across the wakes of grain barges and freighters loaded with Japanese cars. Portland, where I live, is a hundred and ten miles upriver, but still the tide ebbs and flows noticeably; the Columbia sinks, as though it were holding its breath farther west, and shrinks back from its mud flats, leaving a rippled beach behind until the tide returns. Near the city, the planes begin to dart like fish—Learjets, 747s, National Guard fighters swinging in an arc above the water. A tinge of blue fume hangs over the boat ramps, and there is a smell of oil and gasoline.

The Pacific Northwest as a place has the quality of bouncing back—a kind of durability both visual and psychological. It is resilient, exuberant. Some of that, I'm sure, comes from its polymorphous terrain: rain forest and desert, grasslands and sand dunes, coastline and wheat fields, volcanoes and glaciers, sometimes all in the same landscape. Labyrinthine caves, churning ocean, barren buttes, inaccessible canyons split by wild rivers, a profusion of blossoms in spring, golden, sweet-breathed autumns. The land is uncovered, bare beneath your feet. People talk about the land—about building on it, how it would be, even if they know they never will. Sometimes that's enough. The land is the source of safety here.

The early explorers bent over their journals by candlelight, and over their drawing pads by day, trying to convey a sense of the scenery—the promiscuous, unruly, indifferent landscape, by turns hard and soft, calm and terrifying. The wild view—raw shores and mountains—was exotic and stirring, but their preference was for the cultivated view: the occasional meadow, the overgrown, burned-out valley of the Willamette River, the rolling hills of the upper Columbia. The Scottish botanist David Douglas, for whom the Douglas fir is named, thought that the grand vistas of the upper Columbia looked in spring "like English lawns." The explorers—and, later, the settlers—relished the scenes most like home. The rolling, velvet "English lawns" promised that this rough, unfinished place, so often inhospitable and unwelcoming, might someday be the Eden they were seeking.

The Oregon Trail pioneers floated down the Columbia River still covered with the dust of southern Idaho, climbing out every few miles to portage the rapids, wondering at the moisture in the air. The story goes that at one of the crossroads on the Trail a sign marked the way to Oregon and a pile of rocks the road to California—a guarantee that the literate would take

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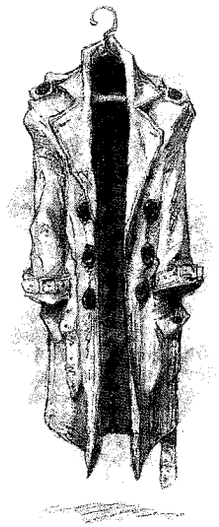
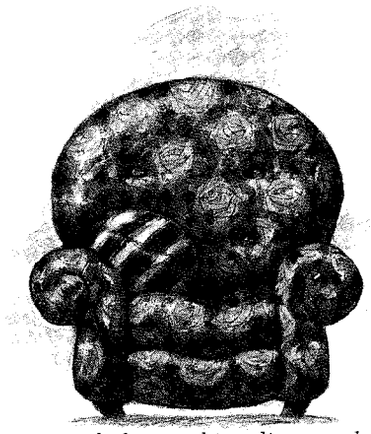
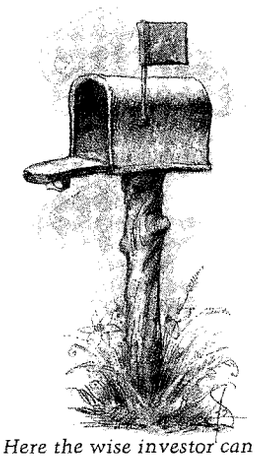


In these pockets you could find several mislaid dollars, some tissues and a rather linty throat lozenge.



Beneath these cushions lies a comb, some old pet toys and lots and lots of change. All of it yours for the taking.



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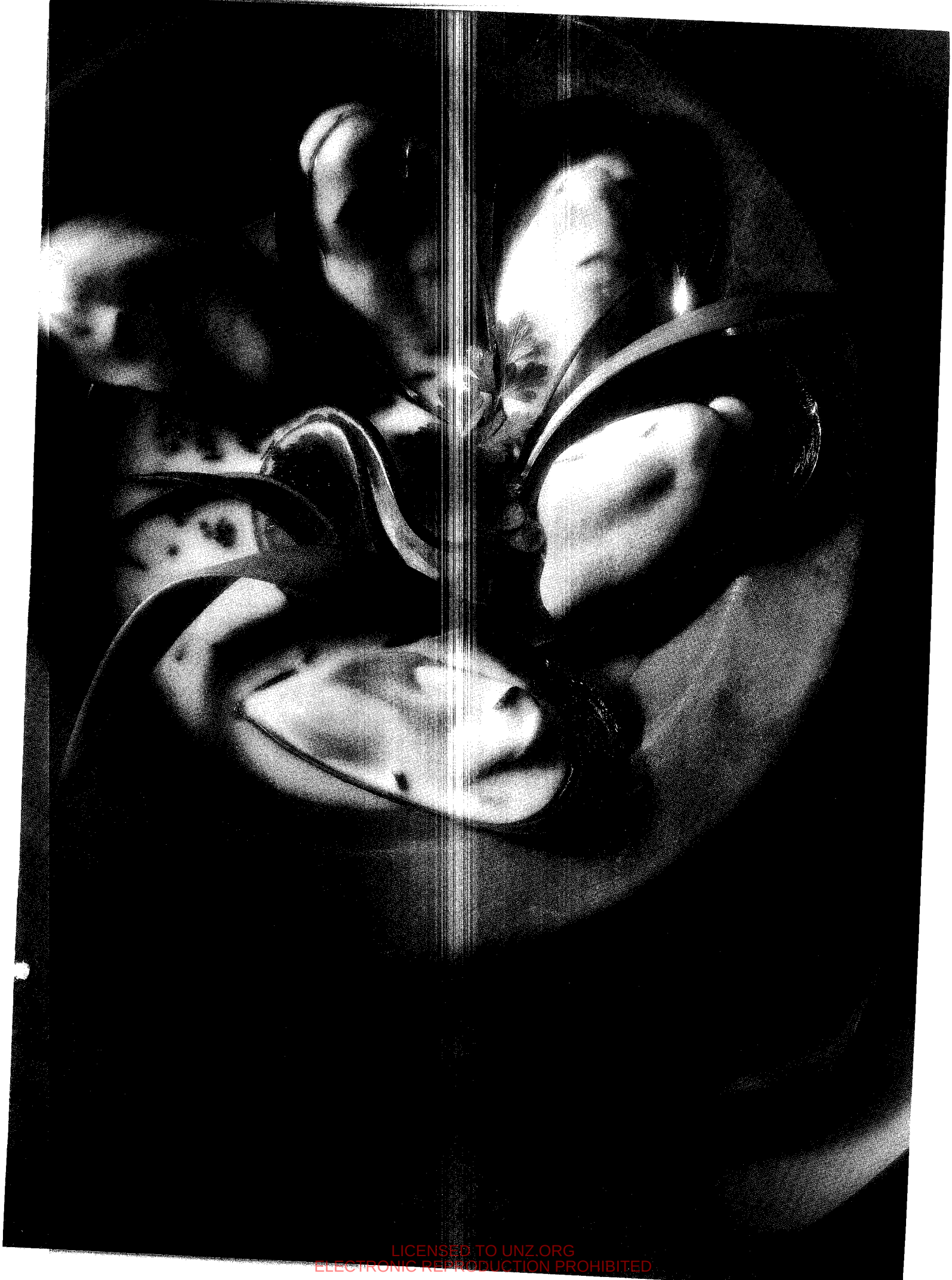

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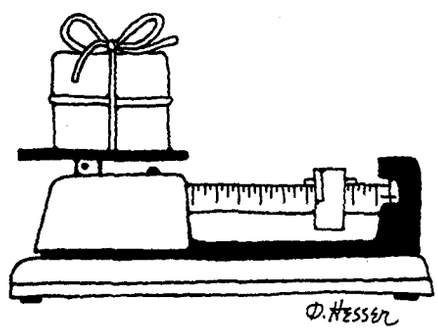
the northern route. Pioneers came off the plains and over the mountains tired and dry, and stopped in what seemed like heaven. In their relief, they started towns—tiny hamlets called Donnybrook, Wonder, Amity, Friend, Nonpareil, Rest, Wise, Startup, and Horse Heaven. There is Lookingglass, so named because the green grass reflected sunlight. Everyone had big plans. When a few hungry, worn-out settlers gathered on the skirt of Puget Sound at the mouth of the Duwamish River in 1851, they shivered in the fog and the isolation. They named their smoky village New York–Alki, Alki being a local Indian word that means "by and by."

As much as we live in a place, we live in *place;* we inhabit a condition of the soul. The geographer Yi-fu Tuan calls place "a special kind of object"—something too big and broad made close and dear. When we join ourselves to a place, we take on air and land as though they were clothes. We live where we have made definitions, and in the process of making definitions we create a place in which to live. Eugene Victor Walter, a professor at Boston University, has coined the word "chorophiliac"—place lover—to explain his own appetite: he loves the sense of place wherever he goes. Such appetites begin early, and the sources can be momentary and specific: for one person trickling water, for another a narrow street, a kind of cloud, the scent of corn before the harvest. The Northwest is my place, and consequently it is a kind of bound. I live here sometimes as though it fenced me in; I can't leave even when I long for leaving. I am a chorophiliac of this *choros* here, outside my room—this spherical universe wrapped layer around layer with the cunning of nesting dolls.

I grew up in a town once described as a "choice of bar, den and dive," a gold-mining camp turned into a mill town called Yreka, just south of the Oregon-California border. Yreka—pronounced "why-ree-ka"—is eternally confused with Eureka, a mill town on the Northern California coast often wreathed in fog and, to my mind, a considerably gloomier place. (Yreka is famous to a surprising extent for a palindrome—the name of a shop a few blocks from where I lived called the Yreka Bakery.) At the age of seven, I was taken to see a show, a young Karuk Indian's demonstration of native dances. The Karuk tribe believed that its territory, on the lower Klamath River, was the *sivsinenachip*, the middle of the world: from out of that place, where the trees and salmon and people were born, the rings of time spread in concentric waves, to the mountains and beyond.

The show was south of town, at the fairgrounds—an expanse of packed dry ground, where I learned to drive, at fifteen, in my mother's lumbering Chevrolet Impala. On sunny days, clouds cross the mahogany-colored hills nearby, sliding over the scrubby land like the shadows of huge coasting birds. The hills are broken by ravines and coated with pale thistles, golden poppies, and blue bachelor's buttons. I never felt any boundaries there, any sensation of private or forbidden land; we stayed out of the hills and woods only during the deer season, when shots began to ring out before dawn with the smack of a steel bell. I was used to going to the fairgrounds for fireworks on the Fourth of July, and for the twinkling, noisy, aromatic county fair. But the Karuk dance was an oddity—one big group of people in a single corner of the empty acreage, all facing in one direction. The crowd was close in the hot sunlight; I was short, and I jostled damp skin for room. I could see the Indian in the distance, his bare brown feet pounding the stage, his floor-length headdress waving back and forth, back and forth, as he nodded and shuffled to a drum.

At some point, my name was called—a mysterious, never explained occurrence—and I was pushed forward through the people and made to climb onto the stage. I had lived near, grown up beside, Indians all my life—big families, still bearing the names given their ancestors by the gold miners more than a century before. The miners invented diminutives for the Indians and never bothered with surnames, so a grown man became Tall Henry, or Little Jim Joe. When all else disappeared, when *sivsinenachip* cracked and the rings of the world broke apart, the names persisted. My playmates and neighbors were the Oscars, the Toms, the Jerrys, and the Crows. I never thought of them as "Indians"—as anything special or apart, better or worse than I was. They were simply neighbors. So that day I climbed the steps to meet my first Real Indian, my longed-for brave, astonished at my good fortune and hypnotized by his beauty. He was tall, bare-chested, shiny with sweat, and he smiled down at me from a great distance, holding a microphone, his long headdress silky and radiant in the sunshine. He asked me to dance for the crowd. Without a moment's thought, I danced the Twist, my own native dance, glad that when the time came I had known what to do.



For many years, Yreka had a bar and a liquor store for every general merchant. The poet Joaquin Miller noted of Yreka and the land north, "In most parts of America the morning salutation is 'How d'ye do? How's the folks?' But on the Pacific it is 'Howdy-do? Take a drink?' " The history of the American West, that grand subject, can be approached in small, comfortable ways: one is seeing it as a fight between temperance and dissolution—a fight won by the drinkers. A man named Fred Stockslager came to Yreka when he gave up on the gold-mining life in the hills. What he found was almost enough to drive him back to Illinois. He complained to a relative in a letter:

> I will also state I never led an intemperate life or gambled or other vises that are so common in California. I seen enough of that stile to disgust me at once when I first come to Yreka. I come here on foot in the night. I come to a house had music in it. The Best fiddlers to be found, tables the whole length of building stacked full of money. Each table was stacked with money. The house was crameđ with people. A great number was gambling. Each table had a female sitting along side the gambler after taking a look all around I went out. Up street I soon come to music again. I soon found plenty of them kind of houses. In them days there was no society here.

My great-grandfather ran a saloon in Yreka called the Dew Drop Inn. He was a Methodist—a common religious choice in the West. He didn't consider it something to hamper him at work, but at last the congregation suggested that he find another business, seeing that the Methodists were

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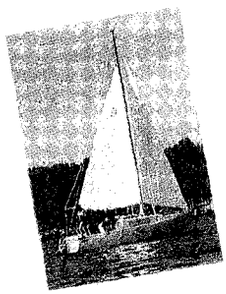

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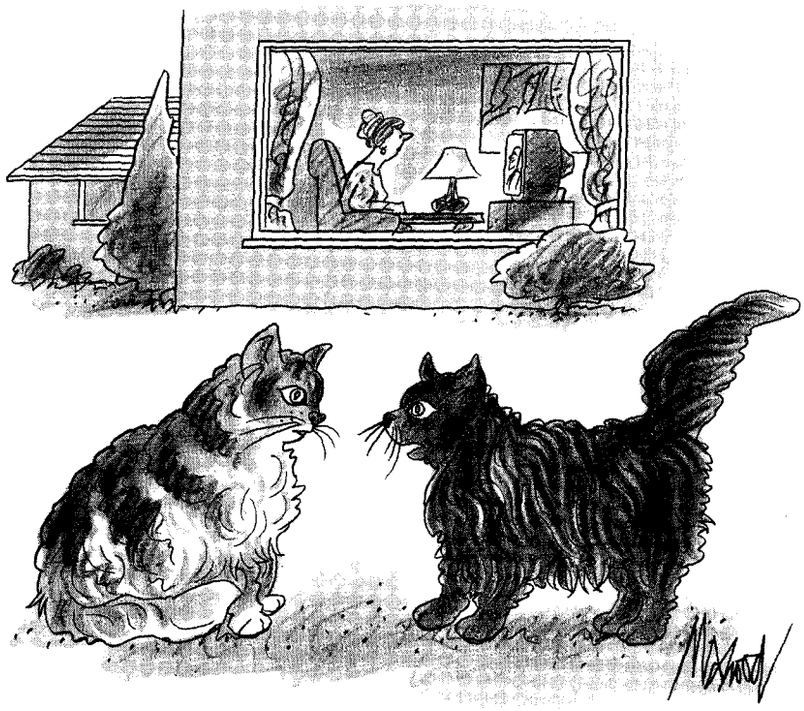

"I know it's illogical, but I feel guilty about wearing a fur coat these days."

• •

teetotallers. He refused. The suggestion turned to a demand. Not only did he keep serving liquor but he had his four daughters baptized Roman Catholics. My grandmother Estelle, who was seven years old at the time, added Mary to her name and started going to Mass. I knew none of this as a child. All I knew was that my grandmother and her sisters were Catholics, a religion that brooked no dissent and admitted no possibility of error. I watched them drive to church, in formal dress, every Wednesday evening, every Saturday evening, every Sunday morning. They do so to this day; their schedule of worship has always had a relentless quality, as though the town Methodists were still watching. But my father married outside the Church, and my siblings and I were brought up as Lutherans. I disliked the lukewarm flavors of Protestantism, and yearned for the solemn discipline of the Catholic Church, with its flavors of confession and sacrifice. My father's apostasy—a subject of much whispering among my brother and sister and me—seemed a brave, if mortal, sin. I believed him to believe himself beyond redemption, headed for hell. For many years, I attributed his melancholy silences to his knowledge of impending doom. And, like his grandfather, he took a drink now and then.

Drinking was what we did—hard not to do in a place described by a reporter for an Oregon newspaper, shortly before I was born, as "the deadest town, these forty years, in all the world." Starting about the age of thirteen, we drank from cheap jugs of wine hidden ever so discreetly in paper bags. My older friends bought it—boys out of high school, with nothing to do and nowhere to go, happy to provide. We drank from flasks of sharp whiskey, choking it down under the bleachers during football games, gasping and laughing and jeering at the cheerleaders before we wandered off to walk the length of town and back, stopping at Sambo's for fries and a Coke. And later, in basement apartments and little rooms on the third floor of faded old houses, we lined up salt and tequila and lemon on old, chipped coffee tables, played records, talked about nothing, nothing at all. Small town. Small forms of small joys.

Sometimes I had to retrieve my father at the Elks club, a few blocks from home, or hand him a message from my mother. The Elks club was a pine-sided, windowless building, kitty-corner from the firemen's hall. There was nothing to mark the place but a small sign, a flush door, and a small red button embedded in the doorframe. I would stand on the sidewalk in the bright sun and push the button, which made no sound that I could hear. After a few moments, the door would open partway, and I could see into a dark room to a glittering bar, the mirror behind it reflecting red flocked wallpaper. My father would be there, belly to the bar, with other nice men I knew—teachers, truck drivers, mill men. My brief business done, the door closed, and I would turn away, blinking into the daylight.

But there are many kinds of intoxication here, not all found in bottles. I knew so from the start, slipping on the creek rocks chasing water skippers, running after rabbits in the meadow behind the school. I knew it leaping off the Kelsey Creek Bridge and falling thirty feet to the cold, dark water of the Scott River.

When I was sixteen, I went into the forest near my home with three friends. It was a lark; we had no particular plan. We bought an incongruous collection of groceries, stuffed inadequate clothes into our backpacks, and drove up the Smith River Highway into the Siskiyou Mountains, through the rain. The narrow road was a wet black ribbon, like a cooper's slat, between endless cone-shaped trees. We found a wide spot, parked, shouldered packs and food, and walked away from the car straight into the woods.

After a while, we found a leaf-coated trail meandering inward, rising slightly, and we followed it. The ceiling of boughs and moss gave way only now and then to a tiny corner of sky, and the rain fell lightly, steadily, as it would for days. As we walked deeper in, we spoke less and less. I felt like an undine—a water spirit, all soft edges. Undines love the rain—especially this drifting, silky rain that never stops but only takes a breath occasionally before it lets go a sigh of moisture. Undines pull the sap up tree trunks, make the leaves widen and grow, encourage the tiny tides of the woods: not tides like the Columbia's great heave but miniature ones—the plump sponge of the woody floor, the gasp of foliage when you push through it. In what seemed the very center of the forest, the *sivsinenachip*, there was a short, flat, solid log bridge across a deep stream. The bridge was marked with a plaque

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dedicating it to a certain Boy Scout troop—an idea so strange in that occult setting that we laughed out loud.

By evening, we were completely wet: tent, clothes, sleeping bags, shoes. The forest was dim and growing dimmer, the floor boggy with rain and fallen leaves. The night was like water to wade through. I found a small clearing among the close trees, and someone else found some dry wood sheltered from the rain by a downed tree. We made a fire (a feat that seems almost miraculous to me now), and set our tent under the canopy of trees. The night leaned in, strong; the firelight was hot and yellow. Outside the flickering dome of light was a soft, sooty dark, and the furry trees were flung in black relief against the sky. We cooked egg noodles in Campbell's tomato soup and passed a bottle of brandy around. The sweet tomato sauce on the buttery noodles was a feast, the cheap brandy was hot and sharp, and we sang softly whatever came to mind. We huddled under our parkas in the rain, not bothering to crawl into the wet tent, and water fell from our hoods and dropped hissing into the fire. My friends' faces were shadowed, and their words rose up from under the shelf of coats.

I find it hard now to imagine ever being happier, or being more willing or able to be happy, than I was that night. I was a very small thing in a very large place, at the mercy of immense forces. And there was tremendous relief in that: it was immortality that I felt. My significance had to do with fit, not size, and I had no greater duty than to be troubled about nothing. How many of the people who stumbled down the Continental Divide into this beautiful place found its beauty too big and inhuman to take? How many others watched its beauty slowly transformed into the muddy streets of small towns, and reached for another drink?

MY great-aunt Lois, a plump woman who was old when I was a child, owned a cabin on the Klamath River. That stretch of the Klamath, just south of the Oregon border, is crossed now and then by narrow bridges, sometimes nothing more than a few planks strung between the lower of two pairs of parallel ropes; the most modern of the bridges is wooden, and wide enough for a single car. The banks are coated with boulders, thorny shrubs, and heaps of gravel thrown up by dredging, mining, and roadwork, and in the spring they are lined with purple lupine and yellow daisies. A two-lane road runs alongside the river. Here the water is cold, fast, dark-green, bone-breaking—serious water, deceptively quiet from the road unless you stop a moment and count the seconds it takes for a log to float out of sight. Every few miles, the road widens into a parking space marked by a sign that reads "No Trespassing." A few feet above the bank is a winch and a cable strung across the water, with a wooden cable car hanging from it large enough to carry one person or a few boxes of groceries. No Trespassing, No Hunting, No Fishing, No Parking, Private Property, Keep Out.

A few of the huge redwoods left grow deep in this wood, near the northern edge of their range; they are scattered singly and in pockets among the other pines—Douglas fir and Western hemlock and Port Orford cedar. The Port Orford doesn't grow anywhere else. It is dying of a rare fungus, and even if the constant export of its timber to Japan stops, it is likely to vanish. To the local naturalist Daniel Mathews, Port Orford cedar has a smell "so exquisite that I would wear it for perfume if I could."

Up the Klamath Highway and north into the wilderness grow rhododendrons taller than houses, and strange flora like the phantom orchid and the rare carnivorous pitcher plant known as darlingtonia. There are foxes here, martens, the disappearing fisher, bobcats, and bears. John Hart, an environmental writer who has hiked the Klamath Mountains quite thoroughly over a period of years, told me, "One thing I loved and still love about that region is that it doesn't come at you with big, obvious landscapes. It doesn't grab you by the scruff of the neck and say, 'Look at me.' I value that. It's deep, it keeps on offering things." Hart talks of rumored ancient miniature yew trees, and a Douglas fir fifteen hundred years old. The latter, I suspect, is a chimera, like the giant salamanders that several people say they have seen a little south of here—salamanders longer than a man is tall. These reports have the ring of truth, though: left alone, the forest grows some remarkable things. There are many wonders here we've never seen, and for every big tree we find, the

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potential exists for a bigger one. The trees we've found—the trees we cut down long ago and turned to planks and shingles—were once beyond the grasp of fantasy. Why not a tree seeded the year King Arthur died, in the decades when Wu Ti was the emperor of China?

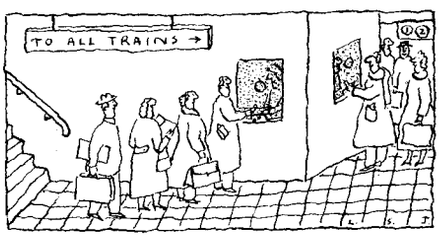
Aunt Lois's cabin was built of logs—whole coppery tree trunks full of knots and oiled to a shine. The rooms were dim and spacious, most of them opening off a big parlor with a huge fireplace built of river stone. It was always cold in the cabin, always shadowy, but there was the luxury of electricity and running water. Most marvellous of all in that dry, rugged canyon, it was surrounded by a thick green lawn, cool and fragrant in the constant breeze. On summer visits, my brother and sister and I stayed out, away from the adults, who were drinking Scotch and smoking in Adirondack chairs on the grass. We chased ground squirrels through the fir trees and turned over rocks on the edge of the bank, never straying too near the fast-running water.

But it was not our Real Place—not real in the same way as our other cabin, in the Klamath National Forest. That cabin was on the Scott River, a minor tributary of the Klamath flowing from the south. The cabin on the Scott wasn't ours, either; it was owned by Grandpa Doc, my father's stepfather, and had been built by Grandpa Doc's father. But children own the world—at least, I did, in those summers on the Scott. My father would drive us there in his pickup, the back crowded with boxes of food, duffelbags of clothes and towels, sweaters, books, beer. We children would ride in the back, too, with Star, the dog, who would be hitched to the truck's cab. The splintery wood of the truck bed scuffed our knees, as we watched acres of alfalfa and timothy hay give way to tall pines, and asphalt give way to gravel and then to dirt. When the wheels began to spit up clouds of dust, we would crawl under my father's tarp, a greasy curtain smelling of sawdust and motor oil. Star leaned against the wheel well, straining for the woods in a kind of bliss each of us recognized, his chin propped on the lip of the truck. He let his eyes drift closed and his jaw loosen and his tongue wag in the perfumed gale, until a child grabbed him by the collar and dragged him beneath the tarp to lie near our feet in the warm and fragrant dark.

If we wanted parental attention, we had to rap on the window of the cab. My mother covered her hair in a scarf whenever she had to ride in the pickup truck; when I looked through the glass, my own hair tossing in the wind, I could see her—a woman in a scarf, riding high above the road, talking and laughing silently with my father. All I could hear was the clatter of tires on the pebbled road and the rush of air; I hung on the windowsill, looking at the backs of their heads and beyond, to the road ahead.

The truck turned down the dirt driveway, bumping through its ruts, and while we unloaded boxes my father climbed the hill across the road to turn on the sewer pump. My mother slid her hand along the dusty doorframe till she found the key and unlocked the door. We carried in Fritos corn chips, beer, Orange Crush, soft loaves of white bread, hard green apples, cornflakes—enough food to last for weeks.

The cabin was a small, boxy two-story building with a deck, which we called the porch, perched on stilts outside the front door—a room-size platform with a rail on three sides and a dusty porch swing in constant shade. On the first floor was a long, narrow kitchen, which was lined—floor, walls, and ceiling—with a wood so old that it was black from years of lamp-oil and wood smoke. Across from it was a square open stairway, which led to a single room twice as large as the kitchen and extending up the stretch of a hill. To the right at the top of the stairs was the bathroom; the floor of the shower was always gritty with sand, and the shower head yielded no more than a drizzle of cold water. Over the kitchen, facing the river, was a sleeping porch—a narrow screened room with several iron beds, each one piled with musty, lumpy mattresses two or three deep. I slept on them in perfect peace. Oilcloth curtains hung in the kitchen windows but were never closed, even in the blackest night. By the front door was



a wooden counter with a chipped white sink, and on the counter there always stood a silvery pail with a ladle. When we arrived, I would grab the pail and run out the back door and down three steps to a spring that trickled from beneath the house. The ground there was boggy, and the plants were wet with dew condensing in the shadows, and I held in my fist the knowledge that we were here for a long time, an infinite time. I would hold the pail under the trickle and wait happily while it filled, inhaling the exuberant scent of the woods, my bare feet cold in the spreading edge of the clear water.

A trail ran away from the spring on a winding course to the river, zigging and zagging in hairpin turns, edged on both sides by a deep, viny tangle of shrubs and poison oak. Under tall ponderosa pines and oaks, sugar pine and madrone, grew a mass of blackberries, daisies, and tiny wildflowers; they grew in pell-mell glory around the tree trunks. Through the trees, I could see the water below, sparkling like tinsel in the hot morning sun. I would drag the heavy pail up the steps and into the kitchen, splattering black spots of water on the gritty floor, and then drink. The bowl of the ladle tingled against my teeth; the water was as cold as ice, and as clear and clean as the high note of a trumpet. Then I could be excused, and go down to the river. The miracle of the Scott in this wild place is that it has beaches—pale beaches of camel-colored sand, hot on the surface and cool and moist below. There are dozens of short, soft beaches along the south side—our side—of the river. They are broken by tough little bushes, and lined with the minute tracks of racing lizards and snakes, and the deep prints of deer.

In the early spring of 1908, two young women, Mary Ellicott Arnold and her best friend, Mabel Reed, came here to "the Rivers" as "field matrons" in the United States Indian Service. They were among the first white women to come to Karuk country, then still a wilderness reeling from the corruption and disturbance of the moribund gold rush. Mary Arnold and Mabel Reed were from New Jersey and had come west looking for adventure of some undefined kind, knowing only that settling down into marriage and motherhood had to wait until more of the huge world had been seen. In the course of their search for some risky

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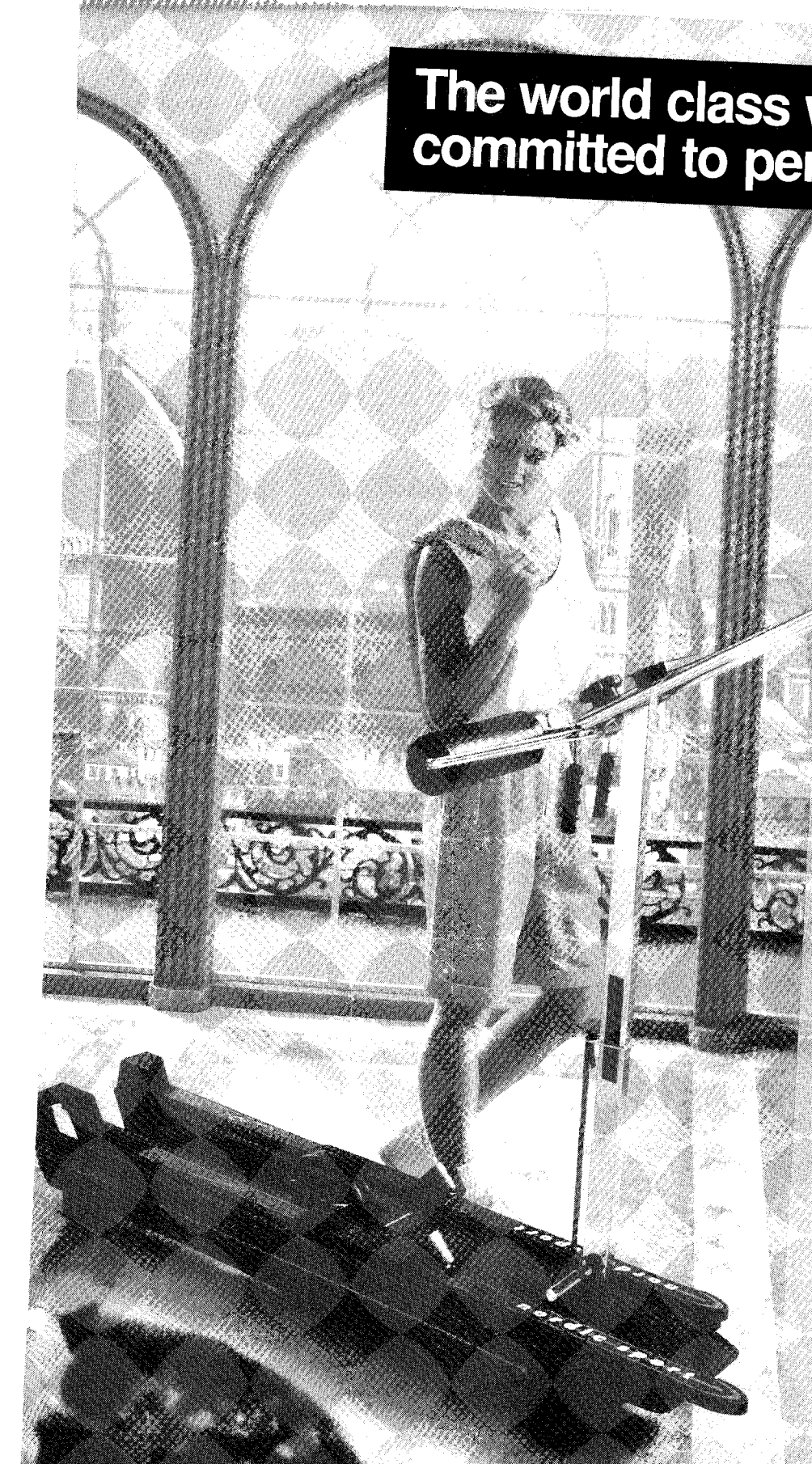

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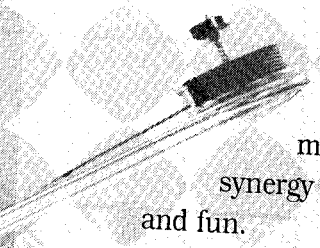

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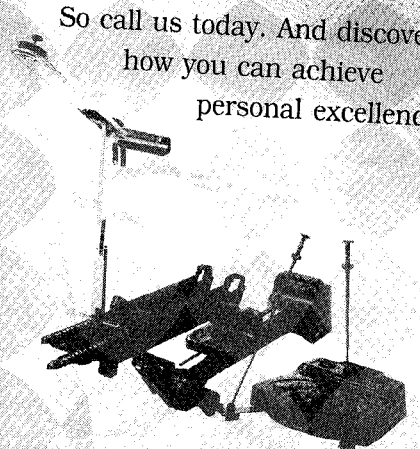

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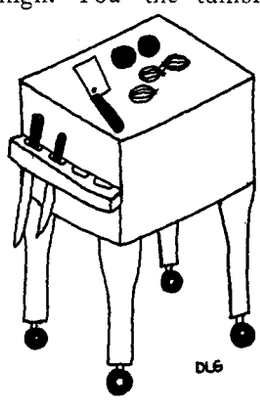
undertaking, the two women had an interview with a Mr. Kelsey in the Sacramento Valley. In a memoir they published jointly in 1957 titled "In the Land of the Grasshopper Song," Mary Arnold wrote:

> We learned he was Special Agent for all Indians in California, and we told him we should like to see what a really rough country was like. Mr. Kelsey looked at our pleated skirts, seven yards around the bottom, and down to within an inch of the floor, and his eye hardened.
>
> "Shall I send you to the roughest field in the United States?" he asked.
>
> I think he expected us to refuse. But of course we did not refuse. It was the chance we had been hoping for.

Miss Arnold and Miss Reed received their commissions, and a promised salary of thirty dollars a month each and travelling expenses, to go into the river country of far northern California and bring the benevolence of the Indian Service to the disadvantaged Karuks. The two young women had never before lived in rural circumstances, and neither had ever ridden before they crossed the Siskiyou Mountains on horseback. They stayed, in varying degrees of primitive discomfort but with a kind of overwhelming joy, for two years. They spoke of their life "on the Rivers," since the cascades and the banks and the rushing water of the Klamath and its tributaries dictated the landscape that rose around them. The Father Klamath was never a neutrality, never a mere mark on the land, especially when it ran high. "You do not think of the Klamath as a river when it is in flood," Mary Arnold wrote. "It is a great evil force. It is alive, and it means you ill." During their first winter, the Klamath ran eighty feet higher than it had in summer.



I rarely saw our cabin in rain, and never in the winter, and it seems to me now that year by year by year nothing changed. The rocks and sand and river channel were all carved out of a fantastic stone, harder than the granite of the hills. I thought of the floods as an ancient phenomenon, something finished and done. But they weren't. Grandpa Doc used to say that a flood had made his beach.

About a quarter mile down the road from the cabin was a summer estate, a great white house with a wrought-iron fence and a green lawn and its own power plant. I have only the faintest memory of the place. Shaded by tall pines, it stood surrounded by grass in a canyon that didn't grow grass, beside a creek that ran beneath a bridge in the road and emptied into the Scott. There was logging up the creek one summer, when I was five or six—the kind of rough-and-tumble logging that takes every sizable tree from a site, creating an opening called a clear-cut. Clear-cutting leaves nothing of the woods behind except trees too small or too young to be worth milling, or of a species considered poor for lumber. Such trees are often cut and simply tossed aside. Clear-cuts are full of a peculiar kind of debris called slash: torn trunks, broken branches, uprooted stumps—an almost impassable surface of organic garbage strewn across the ground. On this clear-cut, the slash remained when winter came, along with the heaviest rains in recent memory. The slash tore down the creek and piled up just short of the big white house, blocking the water. A huge lake appeared across the lawn, spreading up the hillside behind a dam of branches and logs and growing bigger and bigger, until it finally broke through. And when the water came down it took the house, the fence, the lawn, the power plant and its concrete foundation, and it took the bridge, too, as an afterthought, a reminder.

That particular flood had dictated the tumbled boulders and uprooted trees I remember as eternal. The largest of the rocks on our beach was a granite boulder twelve feet high. It was shaped like an egg, and had been thrown down the river and up against a pile of lesser boulders at the water's edge. All the rocks were smoothed by rough winter water, and they hunched against each other, with dark narrow places in between holding spiders, blue-belly lizards, and the occasional snake. The big boulder was set at such an angle that a nimble child could scramble up one side to its top; the top leaned out over the river as though placed there with no other purpose than our pleasure in mind. I would run up and fly off into water clear and cold and deep, slicing feet first through its green-black skin to the sandy bottom.

We spent our days on the river—my brother and I as braves and warriors, my sister more timid and slow. The winding trail behind the cabin led to the beach, and we raced down it each morning as fast as we dared, skirting the poison oak, kicking up sand in the last few feet. There were grownups nearby, but they never seemed to say anything more to me than the calm exhortations I'd always heard: Stay out of the poison oak. Don't bother the snakes. Be back for dinner. The big upstairs room in our cabin was cluttered with trunks and furniture, dusty couches—a huge array of things that my grandmother had no use for in her home. There was an elaborate Japanese folding screen, behind which my mother and sister and I changed clothes, and there were boxes and crates of books and magazines—*Look* and *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*—and clothes, coats, pots and pans, folded curtains, photographs. Sometimes, weary of sun, I rummaged for a magazine in midafternoon and curled up in the sleeping porch, shivering with pleasure in the cool, pine-scented air, and read about Marilyn Monroe, Queen Elizabeth, Elvis Presley, and the young Jack Kennedy.

Some of the cabins built in the nineteen-thirties held long-term leases from the Forest Service; our nearest neighbor had one. Stockmen, packers, and guides could get special forest-use permits to build cabins on federal land. Our cabin was built on something called a patent—a private plot of land between the road and the river. This land, in the middle of a national forest, was private—ours forever.

THE Klamath—like the Rogue River, in Oregon—runs in an unusual, almost defiant pattern. A river typically rises in the mountains and runs across a plateau; the Klamath and other major rivers in the area rise in the plateaus and high valleys of southern Oregon and cross through mountain canyons before reaching the ocean.

In the Klamath region, with its menu of climates, its valleys and palisades, lived the Karuk, the Yurok, the various bands of Umpqua and Shasta, the Modoc, the Chilula, the Wintun, the Whilkut, the Nongatl, the Wailaki, the Konomihu, the Okwanuchu, the Tolowa, the Chastacosta, the Achomawi, and other tribes often lumped

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together as Rogues. The Takelma lived here, too; in the 1910 census, only one remained. The Chimariko, long extinct, and the Dakubetede, the Hupa, and the Tututni were here, and up north, around the lake where the Klamath River rises and there are marshes full of tule and cattail, lived the Klamath, also known as Lutuamian, who called themselves *eukshikni maklak*—the people of the lake. Some of these tribes, like the Hupa and Yurok and Karuk, were so culturally similar and lived so near each other that they seemed to belong to one group, yet they spoke completely different languages. There were so many tribes that the Karuks believed that the Great Spirit invented a new language whenever he camped for the night.

From the time of earliest contact, traders and trappers had noted differences among Indian tribes—variations of physiognomy, coloring, and height. Theories to explain the many "nations" so distinct as to seem like different races ranged from the effect of weather and diet to the influence of latitude. On one thing, though, almost all the early explorers agreed: the Indians of the coastal forests and valleys were far less appealing than the Indians of the plains. Fishing cultures were generally considered inferior to hunting cultures, the former feminine in their torpor, the latter masculine in their drive. The coastal Indians were thought to be ugly, unkempt, fat, and lazy, oddly reluctant to spend their days collecting beaver hides to trade for trinkets. Their life style lacked a certain Christian stress.

In his 1893 "Illustrated History of the State of Oregon," H. K. Hines blamed the environment for what he considered the disgusting condition of the Willamette Valley tribes:

> This character of forests pushed up to, and in places into, the prairies of the Willamette valley, compelling among the aborigines a life in the canoe instead of on horseback, and a living of fat, oily fish instead of alert and sinewy game. Hence they were short of stature; heavy and broad and fat of body; indolent and sluggish in movement; without alertness or perception of mind; indolent and inactive in all their habits; sleeping away nearly all but the little time that was requisite for them to throw their barbed harpoon into the shining side of the salmon that swam on the shoals and sands of the rivers and bays along which they thus droned away their meaningless life, and the few additional moments required to boil or roast it sufficiently to gratify their uncultured appetite.

But these characteristics weren't entirely negative: such gullible, well-fed creatures were also thought to be far more amenable to training—"more pliant and tractable." The Canadian explorer Sir George Simpson wrote in his journal, "I do not know any part of North America where the Natives could be civilized and instructed in morality and Religion at such a moderate expense and with so much facility as on the Banks of the Columbia River."

Traders were driven to distraction by these Indians, who were apparently uninterested in the fur trade and unwilling to consider the future. "In affairs of trade," one historian wrote, "the natives impressed traders as being actively perverse. . . . Two things about the natives especially warmed the trader's heart—[their] furs and [their] absence, particularly the latter." They were uncertain guides, inefficient beaver hunters, content to trade salmon for tobacco and smoke themselves into a giggly stupor. Another historian dismissed the Indians of the Northwest in one sentence: "They are all savages; and they do not figure in the history of the country, over the destinies of which they have not exerted, and probably never will exert, any influence."

The Indians stumped the trappers with their lack of ambition, but there was a deeper objection. A life like that of the Karuks—a routine of gambling and storytelling, broken only by the procurement of deer and salmon and by ritual and medicine-making—was a life of sin, simply by virtue of its ease. How could such lotus-eaters go unpunished by a Calvinist God? The fur traders and the miners—men described as "people of the worst character, runaways from Jails, and outcasts from Society"—still adhered to society's puritan sensibilities. It was right and correct to strive for a living, to go hungry if you were lazy, and to triumph only if triumph was earned by hard work. The coast Indians behaved incorrectly not so much by white standards as by the white concept of Indian standards—a concept that the white man had gained from contact with the nomadic tribes. The tormenting characteristics of the Plains Indians—aggression, a propensity for waging bitter wars, a hostile territoriality—became virtues when the traders were confronted with tribes that

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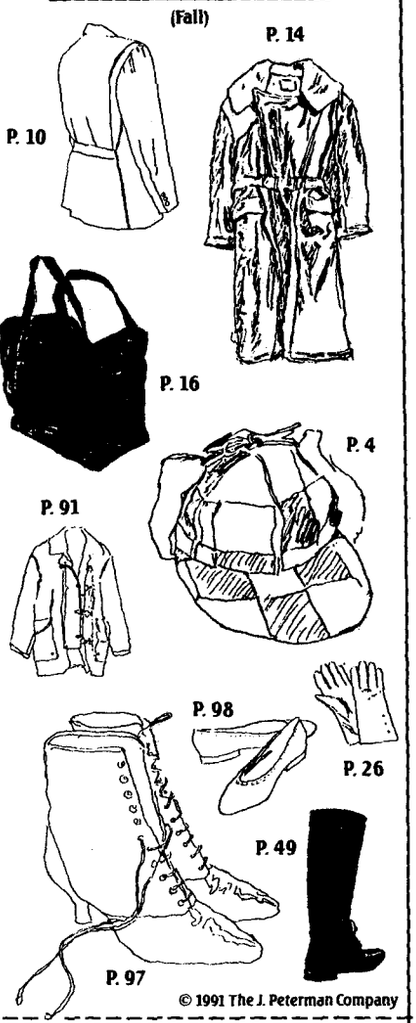

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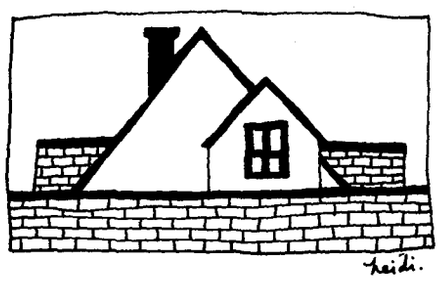
seemed both tranquil and fatalistic.

The simple, solid Karuks lived along the banks of the Klamath in what is now far northern California, most of them in the several dozen miles between Somes Bar and Happy Camp. They oriented themselves by means of the river, which ran like a thread through the middle of the world, and they named four directions: *karuk*, upriver; *yuruk*, downriver; *maruk*, away from the river, or uphill; and *saruk*, toward the river, or downhill. They had little of the worldly ceremonial of north-coast tribes like the Haida and the Kwakiutl—no lean, horseback grace. Their closest northern neighbors, the tribes of upper Klamath Lake, lived in cold, open country, surrounded by golden aspens and huge flocks of geese. Those tribes made petroglyphs, painting, pecking, and scraping them into volcanic rock. They drew chevrons, concentric circles, suns, birds in flight, people on horseback, feathers and lightning, lines like ocean waves, lizards, fishbones, and huge murals. The banks of Klamath Lake are still scarred with these crosshatched, curvilinear stories. But the Karuks did nothing like this. They were just fishermen and gamblers, smelling of eel, leaning on trees beside the river, half-naked and pitch tough. They lived an anarchic life, with no chief, making good baskets but almost no pottery, their tools little more than bone awls and spoons, and a special curved bone for crushing lice. They were great fishers of salmon, using weirs and gill nets made from the fibrous roots of wild iris, dragnets, platforms, and bone-pointed spears. A single family might dry a ton of salmon in a year. They caught lampreys—haggy, eel-like fish, with mouths that open like funnels and are lined with horny teeth. Families had their own fishing holes, but one person could rent another's fishing hole for a percentage of the catch.

The Karuks also gathered acorns, chewed milkweed, ate honey and larvae for treats, made jam and tea from manzanita, and cultivated almost no crop but tobacco. Karuk women wove ceremonial clothes of shredded maple bark, and basket hats for everyday wear. They sometimes cut hair by burning it with pitch. The men trained hunting dogs for the ritual stalking of deer and hibernating bear. Deer were also caught in nooses hung from trees. They were thought to be reborn after they were eaten, and to run back up the steep hillsides to mature until they were ready to be killed again. With bow and arrow, the Karuks shot ducks, grouse, and quail. But there were strict dietary laws: they never ate frogs, gophers, wolves, foxes, moles, bats, eagles, snakes, caterpillars, grasshoppers, dogs, vultures, bluejays, meadowlarks, or wildcats, and they never ate fresh salmon and bear at the same time, and they never killed a coyote. Like many other tribes, the Karuks were great lovers of coyote tales.

All the peoples of the Klamath were gamblers, addicted to guessing games and tests of skill, like wrestling and darts. They made bets of every kind: they were known to wager their mates, their children, their boats, their fishing holes. The search for clearly defined material wealth, the bettering of one another in games, the careful parcelling out of financial blame and obligation filled days empty of the eternal search for food and shelter which occupied the Plains Indians from sunrise to sunset.

Wrongs were exactly valued, even murder. "From what they tell us, killing people in this country is very expensive," Mary Arnold wrote of the Karuk system of debt. "You have to pay twenty-five dollars just for shooting at someone. If you hit him, it costs you fifty dollars. And if you are unfortunate enough to kill him, his relatives demand one hundred dollars." Though the Karuk people lived in small communities, all crimes were deemed to have been committed against individuals; there was no crime against the community, and no community punishment. If you offended a taboo, then you would have bad luck or death—that fact was so obvious that no other punishment was needed. But if you offended another person you had a debt to pay, and if you didn't pay the debt your creditor could kill you. Though it would cancel the debt, murder wasn't a desirable end; it would only start a feud involving one's whole family.



These debt feuds were the closest the Karuks got to war, and could be ended only when the last debt was paid by the survivors.

All wrongs, even indirect or accidental ones, had to be financially compensated. In the early days of white settlement, such compensation still took the form of deerskins or baskets or woodpecker scalps or obsidian blades, or—often—strings of dentalium shells, which were measured against calibrated tattoos that every man had on his forearm. The anthropologist Alfred Kroeber wrote that killing a man was worth fifteen strings of "money." Making an unmarried woman pregnant would cost two or three strings; a boat could be bought for only two strings "of not very good shells." Later, as Mary Arnold found, cash became preëminent. Money was hoarded to show wealth, which conferred the only real status. Wealth was good; thrift was good; laziness and showing off were bad. Once a Karuk became wealthy, it was easy for him to stay wealthy, because a wrong committed against a wealthy man cost more money than the same wrong committed against a poor one. Once a man was poor, it was hard to get rich. Slavery was a way of paying off debt, sometimes through the proxy of one's child, and occasionally a person entered into voluntary slavery in exchange for room and board. Though there was no taboo against premarital sex, children born out of wedlock were a debt, and a bastard was someone "not paid for." Wives had to be bought, too; if the husband couldn't pay the marriage price, he could go to his father-in-law "half-married" and work off the debt. Divorce by either party created a complex divvying up of debts and credits.

The Karuks were medicine-makers; medicine and debt were the twin poles of the world's magic. There were formulas for success in fishing and hunting, for love, for revenge, for ease in childbirth, for growing hair, for staying young, for preventing or curing sexual problems or mistakes, for cursing others, and for protection against curses and against witches. The witches were called *apruruwan*. Pains of every kind were thought to be tangible objects—short, pointed at both ends, and colored black or red. An *apruruwan* might buy pains from other tribes, and might even send pains into people in order to make money by calling the

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pains back. Like everything else, formulas and medicines were bought and sold. Medicines, in fact, were thought not to work unless they were paid for; the universe was an encircling world of value. The Karuks invented money in the rainy woods and then counted every single thing in their world and gave it a price; they kept neat oral lists of equivalence and discount, running their happy, anarchic cornucopia as though it were a giant mall.

Essie, one of Mary Arnold's and Mabel Reed's best friends among the Karuks, insisted on teaching the two women a love charm—an heirloom from her family, worth a large sum of money. "I would have you know that this is not a plain, ordinary love song but a true love charm, and it is warranted to bring down any gentleman we have set our hearts on, no matter how great his disinclination," Arnold wrote. "All either of us has to do is sing him this song and drop a few grains of dirt from a special anthill in his coffee, and the deed is done. Very valuable knowledge, Essie considers it, for unprovided-for young ladies like ourselves."

The earliest white men to live in the Pacific Northwest now and then deserted their companions; a trapper would suddenly decide that the Indians—those well-fed, lazy West Coast Indians—had the right idea, and would go to live with them. Some never returned. For the Karuks and their neighboring tribes around Mt. Shasta, Joaquin Miller envisioned an idyll, like the idyll dreamed of by the wandering trappers. It was "no less a project than the establishment of a sort of Indian Republic . . . a confederacy under the name of the United Tribes . . . a reservation in its fullest and most original sense." No white man would enter without permission, and no Indian would leave. Inside that bounteous, dramatic landscape, every need could be met—shelter, food, beauty, history, family. The Indians would not be given money, and nothing would be taken from them. They would simply be left alone, "to adopt civilization by degrees and as they saw fit." It was not to be.

So the Karuks, who still number three thousand in an area of eight thousand square miles, are struggling to cope with a shifting world. The Karuks were confused in the stream of time, and no wonder: they lived in a young mountain range among very old rocks, on the banks of a river cutting through the canyons backward.

IN the winter of 1836, a New York physician named Elijah White came home from a night call "shivering with cold, seated himself by the fire; and while warming his benumbed fingers, took up the *Christian Advocate* for a few moments' perusal, and, glancing over its contents, suddenly, in his usual jocular manner, observed to Mrs. W., that there was a call for them from Oregon; that the board of missions advertised for a clergyman, physician, &c., &c., and as he could act in the capacity of pill-pedler, he thought it might be well to respond thereto. She did not immediately answer; and looking up, he was surprised to find her weeping."

Some of us who have lived through more than one winter on the western slope of the Cascades might understand her tears. There have been weeks when I would have preferred a conflagration to another day of rain. But Mrs. W. had a secret. Unbeknownst to her beloved mate, she had always had "a deep and absorbing interest" in the region of the great Columbia, and had harbored a desire to see it which she thought was unseemly in a wife and mother. She had presumed the whole fantasy impossible. But a few months later Dr. and Mrs. White were appointed to the Oregon Territory by the board of missions. With their year-old son, Silas, and a teenaged son of Dr. White's named George, they joined an odd party: three maiden schoolteachers, a carpenter, a blacksmith, and the self-announced betrothed of a missionary who was already in the territory. The Oregon Trail did not yet exist, and the route to the Pacific Northwest was a long sea trip, in close quarters, around the Horn to the Sandwich Islands (now Hawaii) and on to the mouth of the Columbia River.

Dr. White and his wife found a new world when they arrived on the misty Columbia—a savage garden, flowering with trees. In an 1848 memoir ("Ten Years in Oregon: Travels and Adventures of Doctor E. White and Lady"), Mrs. W. recalled a "perfectly sound" tree, with a circumference of fifty-seven feet nine inches and three hundred feet in height, lying on the ground. Canadian loggers had cut it down, because they believed it to be the larg-

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"You ungrateful little beast! How dare you accuse me of being an overbearing stage mother! Go to your room and stay there!"

• •

est tree in the world. (It must have been a great accomplishment to cut down the world's biggest tree. But there were bigger ones.) The magnificent woods were too big, too dark, too cool for the settlers. The trees were "indecently large," unheard of, improper. Visitors complained of a "peculiar melancholy," of trees "startling and strange." The dark, damp rings at the middle of the world engulfed the Easterners, so long used to plants of a more conventional, manageable size.

These were trees tall enough to stand shoulder-high to the Washington Monument. These were trees taller than the Statue of Liberty, base and all. The trees were so big that the loggers couldn't pull a saw back and forth in a straight cut. They had to go at each tree by angles, cutting in piece by piece; they would sometimes cut out a chunk and plant dynamite, just to get started. Even now, the tallest trees in the Northwest contain microclimates—different miniature weather patterns at root, trunk, and crown. Back then, they must have contained microstorms, bantam lightning bolts flashing through tiny clouds stuck in the limbs. No one knows how big the biggest trees got: there are photographs of trees with diameters that appear to be nearly twenty feet. (Stories, of course, of trees considerably bigger than that.) The Mineral Tree (long ago cut down), near Mt. Rainier, is the largest Douglas fir on record—fifteen and a half feet in diameter and four hundred feet tall.

The trees were so big that whole families lived in the stumps. A photographer kept his studio in one near Clallam Bay, in Washington. The post office in Elwha, in the Olympic forest, was a stump—which says something about Elwha, but more, perhaps, about the trees. It was roomier than a lot of local cabins, and there was plenty of headroom. In 1895, a United States postal inspector dropped by and demanded improvements, so they fixed up the roof. Children grew up in these gnomish caves, reared in the must and spores of the upright, dying foot of a tree, with a little stovepipe sticking out at a jaunty angle, a small double-sash window cut through foot-thick bark, and Father in a chair on the "porch," leaning back into the whorled roots.

Big, old trees. A Douglas fir—which is not a true fir but a separate genus within the pine family—was young at four hundred years; an eight-hundred-year-old tree was a fine, comfortable Douglas fir. (An immature Douglas fir was called a bastard fir: no use to anyone.) Redwoods weren't grown until they had at least eight hundred rings. The peripatetic journalist Stewart Holbrook wrote that when a logger "said these trees were older than Jesus H. Mackinaw, it meant something more than a logger's pleasantry."

They're all gone—all except a few hardy individuals, off the track, locked away in wilderness, guarded by borders and laws. In 1850, the Mark Twain Tree, a sequoia, was cut down to join a travelling exhibition. When it finally fell, after days of breathless work, fifty men stood side by side around the edge of its stump. Another giant, the Discovery Tree, was felled around the same time; cut into sections and put on display by P. T. Barnum, the tree was dismissed as a fake, but its stump was turned into a dance floor, where dozens of couples could waltz. So many stories, so many photographs of an act brazen in the extreme, committed with absolute deliberation.

"On your right is Oregon," the journalist Charles Nordhoff wrote of his ride up the Columbia, "its hill-sides a forest so dense that jungle would be as fit a word for it as timber; on the left is Washington Territory, and its hill-sides as densely covered as those of the nearer shore. This interminable, apparently impenetrable, thicket of firs exercised upon my mind, I confess, a gloomy, depressing influence." Nordhoff (a grandfather of the co-author of "Mutiny on the Bounty") came to the forests of the Pacific Northwest in the early eighteen-seventies, to write another in a long series of cautionary guides for the growing numbers of tourists interested in the region and its curiosities. Decades after logging began, he was oppressed by all the trees that remained: trees growing wherever he looked, seeming to lean down upon him in his passage with a kind of malevolence. He described a sawmill outside Astoria, a settlement on the Oregon side of the Columbia's mouth, as "sawing away for dear life, because if it stopped the forest would

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doubtless push it into the river, on whose brink it has courageously effected a lodgement," yet as making "scarcely an appreciable impression upon the belt of timber which so shuts in Astoria that I thought I had scarcely room in it to draw a full breath." He went into the woods with the loggers and watched a tree fall—a tree six feet across and two hundred feet high, a middle-sized tree—and called it "one of the grandest and most majestic incidents of forest life . . . a very great sight, not soon forgotten." Like his peers, Nordhoff didn't see the hand of God in the giant trees; he saw God's handiwork in the strength of the men who brought the trees down.

It wasn't only that the trees were big. They filled the land in unimaginable forests, covering it "like hair on a dog's back," in the words of a man who grew up in a logging camp. Squirrels could travel from California to Canada without touching the ground. These forests, in fact, seemed more than the white man could use. They covered thousands of square miles, broken only now and then by a few grassy, fertile valleys. Trees grew to the very edge of every mile of coast and along almost every river and stream, climbed the mountain slopes to the timberline, and marched up and down hills too steep for a horse to negotiate. The forests were unsurveyed, unclaimed, free for the taking if a man could only figure out how. The forests were so huge that the fires in them were beyond belief; fires might last for months, explosive balls of flame leaping from tree to tree, without a break, for miles. When the Tillamook Burn exploded in 1933 (it burned four times in less than a generation), its destructive power rivalled that of the eruption of Mt. St. Helens: it raced across two hundred and twenty thousand acres in twenty hours and sent smoke almost eight miles high, into the stratosphere. The timber burned in that fire amounted to about two-thirds of the nation's annual output that year, and it covered only a portion of a small part of the forest.

The early settlers were somewhat discouraged, gnawing like beavers against the edge of the woods, pushing into it from scarce flat ground near the water, burning stumps in fires that lasted for weeks, the gray smoke hovering like smudge over the shaded clearing. Tree after tree was removed by slow fires. Two holes were drilled

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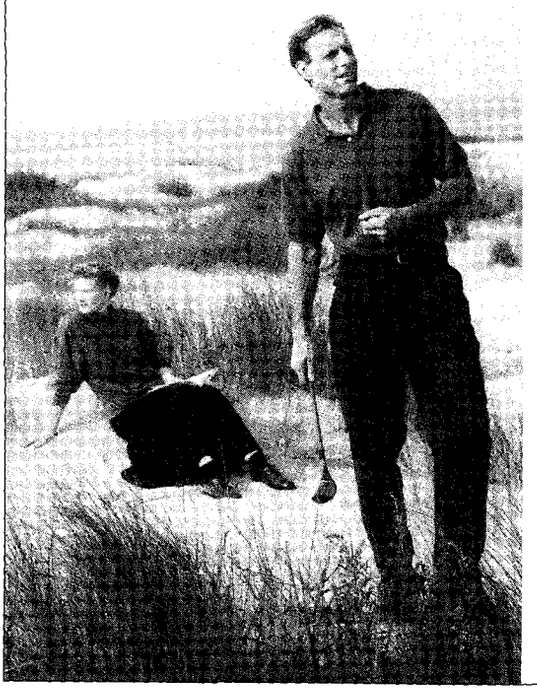

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in a tree at angles, to pull a draft. Burning coals were put in the holes, and several days later the trees were hollow shells and could be more easily cut down, one by one by one. Fallen trees had to be burned, too—in many sections, over a whole season. In its early, muddy days, Portland was nicknamed Stumptown, because there were giant stumps in the middle of all the streets. (Some of the stumps were whitewashed, so that they could be seen at night.) In 1866, the travel writer Samuel Bowles observed, "It is impossible to calculate the time when, cut and saw as we may, all these forests shall be used up, and the supply become exhausted." No one, Indian or white man, could imagine them gone.

THE Northwest is composed of forest zones, each zone dominated by a particular species of conifer. The wet winters and dry summers make for a strange climate for trees: great quantities of moisture fall, but at the wrong time of year. Deciduous trees, with their broad, seasonal leaves, are at a distinct disadvantage here, but the conifers keep their needles and suck up moisture all winter long, holding it tight in their wide-ranging roots and enormous trunks.

An old forest, a forest undisturbed, reaches a state called climax. It is a proper word, erotic, to describe a place quiet and ripe and hanging eternally at the peak, the zenith of its reach. These days, we talk about old growth—a specific kind of forest, not always climax. Old growth—a dull term—means a forest with every element of the forest occurring at once: an ur-forest. Old-growth forests have mature trees over two hundred years of age, standing dead spars, large fallen logs on the ground and in the streams, a varied canopy of shade and broken sun. Left alone, they will continue to grow, age, and change for centuries, not reaching the most stable stage, the sustained state of climax, until the largest trees are twelve hundred years old. And there are such stands here, hidden away.

All things being equal, the Western hemlock will always dominate the Douglas fir, because the hemlock is a fecund seeder and loves its own shade: a hemlock births one new hemlock after another in its shadow. Douglas fir likes sun and grows slowly in the hemlock's darkness, but it has a few advantages, given time. Once a Douglas fir reaches the partial sun in the canopy, it grows taller and straighter than anything else around, outstripping the hemlock, the grand and noble firs, the Western red cedar around it, eventually forming stands composed almost purely of itself. In its youth, the Douglas fir is knotty and wide-grained—second-class timber. As it matures, it grows more slowly, piling on rings in close, fine grain, free of knots, adding bark inches thick. An old Douglas fir is so big that the grooves of its bark are deep enough for a child to sit inside.

And the Douglas fir thrives on fire and storms and various catastrophes, including the depredations of human beings. It thrives, I mean, *with time*—with a fair amount of time. A fire or a windstorm or natural erosion clears out a sunny space for trees, and blows the seeds and cones around. Newly opened spaces chase out certain species and invite others in—a dynamic change that the Douglas fir seems to need. Given time, in increments of centuries, all these Western forests strive to crest. Imagine this: a climax more stable than the conditions that led to it, a diverse and potent system functioning as a single, dominant thing. A climax forest reproduces itself, maintains itself, is so thick with biomass and diversity that it can hardly be defined in ecological terms. Left alone, it will pulse its own slow pulse, exhale its own slow breath, forever. There is little on this earth so close to immortal.

It is easy to imagine, from the dismayed descriptions of the early settlers, that an old forest is so thick that one can hardly pass between the trunks. The canopy is dense enough so that not much snow reaches the ground; the rain condenses into new drops on the needles, and is called throughfall. (The elk gather in places like this in the winter, because the forest floor stays dry and food is never hidden under a drift.) The light is green, the trunks are rusty red, and the air seems filtered through a curtain; it flickers, as though the curtain moved in a breeze. What looks like a rolling landscape of miniature hills and ravines is really the topography of decay: gentle streams flowing underneath the melting death of fallen logs; the disguised hump of rootballs; piles of needles and leaf; middens and dens. In these big trees, hung with lichen and moss, there is always something falling: twigs, spores, seeds, a small drop of excrement or a leaf, chewed needles, bits of bark, a lost feather, a tuft of fur. It is called litterfall, this drifting haze in the air; through the litterfall and the light filtered by the green plants and the brown wood, the trees rise up as though from smoke.

Old growth, so seductive to the logger because of the quality and quantity of wood, is as healthy as a forest can be. But these are the forests consistently dismissed as "decadent" and "overripe"—as selfish systems, hogging the most nutrients and the largest plots of ground for their own use. A 1989 pamphlet put out by the Caterpillar company—eager to sell bulldozers and cranes to ease the removal of these difficult trees—replies thus to the argument that old growth is a healthy system:

> THE FACTS SAY: Forests do not necessarily improve with age. Decaying stands lack the food resources animals require. Density of old stands blocks sunlight, discouraging new growth. Wood lost "nature's way" exceeds new growth, resulting in a net loss of wood volume, without revenue.

It's possible to counter by explaining the use of decaying logs as food and shelter by various species, by pointing out how much more life there is on the floor of an old-growth forest than in a tree farm. Such points are easy to make, in fact; biology is clearly, undeniably, on the side of old growth. What's significant is the existence of the argument in the first place. Instead of stating baldly their desire to treat wild forests as a crop, the timber companies insult the nature of the forests themselves. They grant enough sentience to an acre of trees to call it selfish; they allow the woods enough aesthetic to call them decadent. The forests can easily be transformed by metaphor into veins of gold to be mined, or fields of wild berries to be plucked. But they can also be deconstructed entirely, changed into something almost wicked, in a kind of revisionist biology.

The biggest trees—Douglas firs and Western hemlocks—grow west of the Cascades. The trees in these forests are spaced in gentle patterns, just so, each with room enough and no more.

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They are at once immensely tall and relaxed: tall without effort. They make tall look easy, and, looking up, you feel vertigo at the spin and weave of their crowns. There are no branches on their lower trunks; they begin to branch only a hundred feet in the air, in the forest heights, where sunshine filters in. A young Douglas fir is a perfect Christmas tree—a little cone of green, branches brushing the ground like brooms. But the big ones are shaped more like bottle brushes. When towns decide to have a great big municipal Christmas tree, they often cut a tall Douglas fir, and someone spends a week or so on a scissor lift, fitting extra branches into holes drilled in its trunk, all the way around and all the way down, so that it looks like a Christmas tree after all.

The reason travel through this country is hard isn't the standing trees but the fallen ones. Everything grows not only near everything else but over, under, and through everything else. The ground is chaotic at first glance and orderly ever after, a mass of vine maples, oxalis, rhododendrons, salal. Here is the ghostly trillium. Here are sword ferns five feet tall, and devil's club, hidden in a bog, with burning spines. Here is the vanilla leaf—called sometimes sweet-after-death, because its faint fragrance isn't released until the leaves are dried. Here are berries and shelf fungus and toadstools, mosses and lichens and ivy. All the fungus has work: it provides food (truffles grow here); it protects healthy trees with its distasteful toxins; it breaks down trees to fix nitrogen for the trees and flowers of the next generation.

There are only so many templates of design in the world, repeating in infinite variation, in pleasing, familiar profusion. Each template is here: crescent, disk, fan, chevron, the curl of wire and the shape of the heart, the cloud. Every texture, too: skin, bone, and fur, trees furry like animals to the touch, like the velvet of an elk's rack. Each shape, each texture is pleasing in itself, but the whole has the greatest power: the placement of variety together—similar, unique. I can think of nothing with quite the same essence of animate perfection. The small templates blend into one large template called "forest," a fundamental pattern. It is forest archetype, forest blueprint. The perfectly evolved organism.

In a mature forest, much of the bumpy ground is composed of fallen trees, which may have taken many decades to drop, and which last almost as long down as they did standing upright. These so-called nurse logs pass through distinct stages of decomposition and decay. New trees grow out of and over a nurse log, and, centuries later—when the nurse log has slouched into the ground under a blanket of moss, and the roots of the now mature trees embrace it—form what is called a colonnade, a straight row of trees. (When the same kind of growth happens on a stump, the new trees form a circle.) But even the oldest log has integrity in this cool, wet climate. A fallen cedar was found with three mature firs, thought to be at least a thousand years old, growing completely around and over it. When a fire destroyed the firs, the downed cedar was salvaged, and its heartwood was still solid.

East of the Cascades, where the weather is drier and colder, an undisturbed forest is quite different. There, in the cliffs and canyons and across the rocky hills, grow thick stands of ponderosa and lodgepole pines, and Engelmann spruce. The ponderosa is the most fire-resistant of the conifers, its thick bark and widely spaced branches well adapted to fending off flames. The lodgepole burns readily, but in the intense heat its cones open up, and when the trees have burned away the fallen cones spread seeds across the empty land. The lodgepole is ubiquitous—a scaly gray tree, majestic in its height. The forest floor, wet or dry, is made of duff—organic matter decomposing into soil—but it's only east of the Cascades that the dry, dusty word seems right. The ground is packed and almost powdery with needles, bark, lichens, moss, and layers of twigs. Mosses and ferns don't cover the ground here, and the middens made by squirrels are easily found: heaps of red pinecone scales and neat, chewed cones at the base of trees.

An old-growth forest is so complex, so layered, that biologists sometimes shrink from trying to define its parts; hundreds of invertebrate species can be found in a single tree. Consider that the forest is not only area but depth, space, dimension. In the old growth, in the untouched woods, is a clutter of time, old trees mingling with new-

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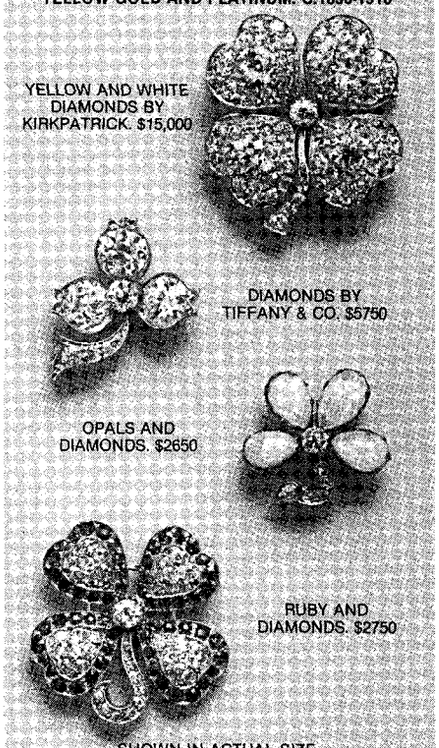

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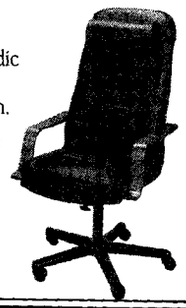

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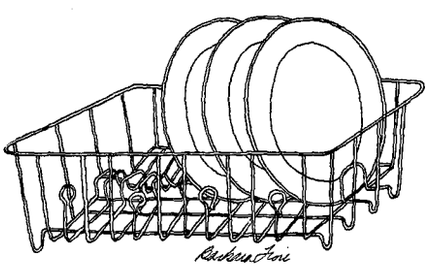
borns, and creatures found nowhere else: the Roosevelt elk, the clouded salamander, the silver-haired bat, Vaux's swift, the rough-skinned newt, the shrew mole, the red-breasted sapsucker, the tailed frog, the marbled murrelet. Haven't heard of them? They all depend, to one degree or another, on the untouched mature forest. Now might be a good time to learn their names; most forest ecologists figure that hundreds, thousands, perhaps many thousands of species will disappear or decline sharply when such forests are gone. Several dozen vertebrates can live nowhere else, and virtually all the old-growth forests have been cut down. What a starker, harder planet this will be when the last acres have disappeared for good.

Last summer, I went camping with my friend Carol in the Strawberry Mountains, in eastern Oregon. We made a steep and wearing climb from Strawberry Lake to the ridge above, through thick pine forest, past a stream that diminished from a waterfall to a trickle as we ascended. When we came out of the trees into the meadows, the lake was a pan of blue far below. At the trail's edge, the land fell away, and the air was a bubble around us. A falcon swooped below me—a sight so unexpected that I almost lost my balance. At this height, the forest is fragmented into clumps—split by snowmelt streams, moist meadows, steep dropoffs, and snowbanks that linger into August. The snow, winds, and barren soil of the timberline turn the conifers to krummholz—stunted dwarves, known more sweetly as elfinwood—about as high as the average snowfall. Carol and I camped at nearly eight thousand feet, in a vast subalpine meadow marked with clouds of early wildflowers and the recent tracks of black bear. To the north, where the trail disappeared under a thick, rippled bank of snow, was rough rock touched by the last sun.

It was hot in the sun—hot enough to strip and lie sleepily batting at the droning bugs and stinking of Cutter's, our bodies pockmarked from sticks and pebbles. Carol, who is fearless, camps alone throughout the Northwest, hiking off the trails and across miniature glaciers, sliding down hills and clambering up ledges, in search of a new unbroken view. We steamed in the sun, and she told me camping stories. A few years earlier, she was camping alone in a meadow like this one, somewhere on the slopes of the Three Sisters, in the central Cascade Mountains. She had seen no other hiker all day, so after she made camp she took off all her clothes and went swimming, washed her hair in the stream, and then lay down to sunbathe herself dry. When she went back to her tent, everything was as it had been, except for a freshly picked bouquet of flowers at her door.

The day had been hot and clear, and the drifts of dirty snow were pouring off the mountains in chilly, spreading brooks; night fell hard and sudden and black. I woke in the middle of the night to stretch and look at the stars, which populate these skies so much more thickly than they do in Portland. I climbed out of my tent and stood for a moment in the cold, completely disoriented. Not only could I not see any stars, I couldn't see anything resembling the sky. In the few hours since we went to sleep, a cloud bank had dropped down on us and lowered the temperature by thirty degrees or more.

In the morning, Carol decided to climb higher and swing around the ridge past two more small lakes. I left the ridge for Strawberry Lake below. The only sunlight I saw all day was a ruby glint on a peak higher than where we had been. A cold rain came right after I made a new camp, and turned, all at once, to hail, pounding in the trees and bouncing off the glassy water. Then it was rain again, turning to snow. Snow falling on the Fourth of July. The lake grew choppy and splattered with drops, and the fog rolled past in shreds, crawling over the water. Above the ridge, big, shadowy clouds moved like clouds in time-lapse photography. I stayed on the flat, sandy shore, in the shelter of pines, and counted the flowers I'd found: shooting stars, dwarf lupine, windflower, elephants'-heads. There is always a lot of firewood available in such woods, even in the rain: cones for tinder, and tiny sticks ready to light—it was all there among the crumbling logs, under the branches of saplings, fallen from dead trees, lodged haphazardly in the arms and crotches of living trees. I gathered wood from a hillside, and when I touched a match to the sticks they shot out flame as though they'd been soaked in kerosene, and shrivelled to coal in a few moments.



All day and all night, I could hear the sounds of the trees—a voice separate from the plop of fish, the call of crows, and the swishing sound of the snowy wind. It was full of creaks, snaps, pops like a woodpecker's rhythmic beat, and thunks like the sound of an axe hitting a small log. *Tock-tock, tock-tick-tock:* the sound of standing dead trees bumping against the living, the stretch of a branch an inch closer to falling. After a few hours of walking around, I could identify the specific sounds of individual trees and spars, gauge the distance between a particular tree and my tent. It was never far enough. Alone by the lake, under a sky dim with thunderclouds, I sat by the fire, snowflakes hissing as they fell. I could see logs, and platters of broken slate, tumbled right to the water's edge, and hear that constant, irregular talk, a most lonesome and familiar sound.

NEAR Taylorville, on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, is a steep, denuded mountain next to the highway, shaved clean. Across the highway, a giant pile of yellow sawdust grows taller in the perfume of a nearby pulp mill.

The signs giving the planting dates on clear-cuts often add the motto "America's Renewable Resource." True enough, if all you want is wood and you have a few generations to wait in, and the willingness to live among the dull monocultures of second-growth farms for the rest of eternity. But old-growth, virgin forests are irreplaceable, like oil reserves and extinct species: gone is gone for good. They don't—can't—grow back in a dozen dozen generations.

Last spring, I wandered up a two-lane road north of Willamina, Oregon. No road signs, no shoulder, only fences to hug each time a logging truck rumbled by. I was climbing into the Coast Range, a long spine parallel to and west of the Cascades—the first wall for the ocean rains. In April, the road was still speckled with banks of snow, and a complicated tapestry of

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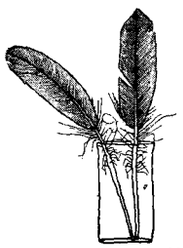
sunlight fell down the canyons, which were filled with groves of birch and pine. The delicate rose-red lace of the young birch buds hung in halo. I would get lost in the dappling of light sliding down into haze above a floor of thin, glaring snow, and then, around a corner, feel the slap of a clear-cut. All the trees were gone, and the spring sunshine poured down on an empty plain: bristling trunks, red clay in piles, angled slash, ragged stumps. Then another curve, another corridor of trees, as though the desolation had never been.



B.B.G.

Clear-cuts can be pretty, from a certain distance. On a sunny day, the whole of the Pacific Northwest is freckled with them; the forest is like a quilt stitched together with the patches of clearing. (You have to be quite high for the view to achieve this effect; the trick lies in not getting too close.) If a clear-cut has been planted, it can look like a Christmas-tree farm; if not, like leather or mud. Cuts come in every size and shape: here is a diamond, there a field like the outline of Idaho, here a star. Dirt roads are stencilled through the green, like snail trails, and in some places—the stretch of northwestern Oregon from Portland to Astoria, for example—there is more cut than growth. But here is a perfect egg, and there a wobbly rectangle, and, beside it, two squares, point to point, like Argyle. One peak has been peeled off in a circle—a tonsure of logging—and to the right of it a road climbs a mountain round and round to the top. These unnatural shapes are plopped down in the soft curves of geological time the same way we insert bridges and buildings and a ribbon of paving, and it's possible to squint and see the art. A bridge in a certain light, a glass-walled skyscraper catching sun have a kind of organic virtue, and clear-cuts on a sunny day, from the heights, are warm and brown and brushed to the tender, bare uniformity of suède.

But we can't always keep that distance. For more than a century, timber companies and the Forest Service have practiced the preservation of something called a buffer zone—a row of trees between clear-cuts and busy roads. Its purpose is said to be "preserving the visuals," but the general term for a buffer zone is a "fool-'em strip."

Many loggers, and a few foresters, will claim that large clear-cuts are healthy for a forest; it seems to be the flip side of the argument that mature forests are somehow decayed or overripe. Clear-cuts allow sunshine to penetrate to the ground, encouraging the growth of sun-dependent trees like the Douglas fir—economically valuable trees. The openings provide forage for deer and elk (and deer and elk for hunters). Certain other species thrive in the rough slash and the new vegetation. But clear-cuts—beyond a very small size—are biological failures. They leave behind islands of old growth, preventing the migration of animals that won't cross open land and forcing overpopulation of the remaining forest. The new growth in the clear-cuts is usually a single species, of a single age, dominating all other plants, and susceptible to disease. There is little complex understory in a second-growth forest, because the uniform age of the trees makes the canopy close very quickly, shutting out more sun than is shut out in the enormous virgin stands. This state of constant shade can last as long as a hundred years, during which time the ground is almost empty of the tiny plants that flourish in natural woods. And the clear-cutting destroys the large standing dead trees that dozens of species depend on for shelter, and usually destroys the cooling, camouflaging stream cover vital to virtually all animals.

There is no view now without a cut. The eye follows the horizon of trees along the mountains and hits the shorn section of a clear-cut as though hitting a wall. The forest is broken as a promise is broken. And a lot of the twisty, crowded stands of birch and alder, which make the roads a tunnel of filigree dripping with moss, are opportunists infiltrating old clear-cuts—a gradual overtaking of emptied land by new and lesser species. There are clear-cuts on hills so steep that you would have to belay down by rope in order to plant new trees. The soil runs off by the ton and leaves the hills barren and brown; the soil runs all the way down to the streams in the valleys, and kills the fish. One logger can fell a six-hundred-year-old Douglas fir in fifteen minutes now, and he does.

The American Forestry Association has kept a record since 1940 of the largest individuals of most species of

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tree. (Some less common species aren't represented yet.) This record-keeping is called the Big Trees Program, and the trees on record are called champions. The A.F.A. has a precise set of qualifications to determine what makes a specimen the largest, involving points based on height, circumference at chest height (four and a half feet above ground), and diameter of the crown. A fair number of hobbyists spend their weekends orienteering across hills and valleys in search of a rumored big tree—perhaps a tree whose wide crown was spied from a distant road, or a tree mentioned in passing by a store clerk or a gas-station attendant. Big-tree hunters are a tenacious bunch; a single, dauntless seeker named Frank Callahan has found twenty-one of the many champions in the Pacific Northwest. A casual reading of the A.F.A. list is instructive and surprising. A black-cherry tree in Michigan with a crown spread of a hundred and twenty-eight feet? A Pacific madrone almost a hundred feet tall? The list challenges our beliefs *not only about the reality of* trees but about the *possibility* of trees—what trees are. (And it sometimes shakes our belief in the list's own authority: the largest standing Douglas fir on record, hidden away in Coos County, Oregon, is just over three hundred feet high. It would have stood in the shadows of the trees already cut for timber.)

Up a long road off Highway 101 in northwestern Washington is the Hoh rain forest. The Hoh is the Disneyland of big trees. It's safe and well marked, and the trails are short, and the trees are some of the biggest around. The road passes a little cul-de-sac holding one of the largest of the Sitka spruce, and ends in an enormous parking lot filled with mobile homes, trailers, vans, and station wagons. The Visitors' Center at the Hoh is also the trailhead for some of the more popular trails into the wilderness. A hundred and fifty thousand people a year come here—thirteen hundred in a single day on a sunny weekend. The trails—all but a long, difficult one up to the peak of Mt. Olympus—are marked by plaques for a self-guided tour. (And by warning signs, the basic rules of civilization: don't disturb the wildlife, don't pick the flowers, don't throw coins in the creek.) Several miles south of the Hoh is the largest known Western red cedar, and I would never have found it but for a small paragraph buried in a weekly newspaper. The tree grows some distance from the highway, up a series of logging roads. The Washington Department of Natural Resources, which handles logging on state lands (and is also referred to as the Department of Nothing Remaining or Do Nothing Right), used to have signs on Highway 101 directing tourists to this tree. A lot of people detoured in search of it, and their R.V.s and trailers slipped on the slick gravel, sometimes blocking a logging truck from its appointed rounds. People got lost. The site was vandalized. The signs were removed.

I turned off 101 at the most likely place—it was the only left turn for miles—and around the first curve I knew I had been correct: an enormous stump, taller than my van, stood by the road, with the words "Big Tree" and an arrow carved into it. Behind a buffer of tall pines was a maze of old clear-cuts, with second plantings at various heights. It was a hot summer afternoon, and the strange landscape was deserted. I saw no cars, no trucks, no people; heard no sound but the buzz of grasshoppers. White gravel roads forked right and left, doubled back, turned at sudden angles marked only by obscure signs listing specific cuts and contracts. In this flat terrain, I couldn't see past the edge of the road, where fluffy spring-green Douglas firs stood six, ten, twelve feet tall, utterly alike and tightly spaced. The sky was big and light and dusty, the sun very hot in the open, and now and then, when the road rose a few feet, I could see across the rug of young trees into newer clear-cuts, with shorter trees. Two birds darted past my windshield and were gone. Finally, I turned a corner to see, far away, a gray spar reaching out of the green carpet like the hand of a drowning man. I wondered for a few moments why the spar had been left standing, bleached and almost branchless in the sun, and then I understood: this was the Big Tree, the Western red cedar I had been looking for.

A neat sign beside it listed its mea-

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sightings of plumes of smoke on the sea,

and strange geysers.

The twin has surfaced
as if hidden under its brother's cloak.

Then the fishing fleet brings news
of unbearable heat, of hot, coarse sand;

its landing party
must be borne back on litters

and the bare feet of the sailors dangle
and seem beaten with sticks.

A new island treads water offshore,
far from the fatigue of the sensible explanation,

an island at the ideal distance
for staging water music,

where the cellist's legs would part
around the waist of her instrument

and press it with the same force
it takes to cover one's ears from the hiss of steam,

the rolling of the Richter scale.

—James Reidel

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surements: 178 feet tall, 732 inches—sixty-one feet—in circumference. An uneven plank walkway of weathered cedar circled the tree's bulbous base; some of the big, spreading roots rising out of the soil had been cut to make room for it. The tree's bark had gone almost white, like driftwood, and the ragged crown sported only a few green branches, tiny against the width of the trunk. It was a beautiful tree—beautiful like bones gnarled and twisted and cleaned of flesh. But the Western red cedar is a shade-loving tree, and this one had nothing but sun.

I called the Department of Natural Resources a few days later, trying to find a tactful way to talk about this tree, which had seemed so wounded, so caged by space. The owner of the cut, I was told, had given up the timber income possible from the tree in order to save it. I asked the D.N.R. man why the D.N.R. didn't advertise the site, and he explained about the problem with the roads. "Folks who are unhappy with managing forest lands for wood fibre were vandalizing the sign," he added. "Without someone up there to explain intensive forest management, they just didn't understand." He wanted me to know that it was a logger who had realized that this particular red cedar was unusual and had taken the measurements necessary for the A.F.A. record: "He said, 'Gosh, this is a big tree. This one might be worth saving.' There were a lot of shakes, a lot of shingles in that tree. Not all the fellows who make their living in the woods are heartless and thinking just about themselves and their family. I like to say that those of us who work in the woods are environmentalists."

ONE story told about fish in the Pacific Northwest concerns Captain the Honorable John Gordon, who sailed into the Columbia River on H.M.S. America in September of 1845 to defend British territorial claims; it was close to the last time anyone undertook to do so. Perhaps he was more fisherman than sailor, or perhaps he saw the future more clearly than his superiors did: Gordon declined to engage in battles either diplomatic or military. Instead, he is said to have told the Queen that Oregon wasn't worth the struggle after all, because the salmon in the Columbia wouldn't rise to the fly.

But who needed flies back then? Salmon, sturgeon, flounder, trout, crabs, oysters, and cod were swarming in these waters, all of them big and incautious. David Douglas took part in a sturgeon feast that involved a fish more than ten feet long. The salmon sometimes weighed a hundred pounds each. They ran in the thousands and hundreds of thousands, and when they spawned, up the rivers from the Pacific and up the streams from the rivers, they ran in the millions and tens of millions. An early settler spoke of "salmon time" in Puget Sound: "The bay was all aglitter and agleam with the shining beauties that were constantly springing from the waters in every direction, their silvery sides sparkling in the sunlight." The huts of the Clatsop tribe on the Columbia were full of salmon, wrote the nineteenth-century historian Frances Fuller Victor: "On the fire, on the walls, overhead, dripping grease and smelling villainously, are salmon—nothing but salmon." When miners first came here, they told of the clouds of fish, the rushing froth from mad mating battles, horses that wouldn't cross streams but reared and bolted away from the huge fish that swarmed the banks and bit at their hooves. Even in the middle of this century, when I paddled through the water the fish darted away by the dozen.

The Scott River, flowing by our summer cabin, was fed by myriad streams running off the ridges above. Meals at the cabin were rarely more elaborate than corn chips and soda, with one exception: when Grandpa Doc was with us, he went fishing every morning before dawn.

Grandpa was a very tall and slender man, and utterly bald; he carried himself with an insouciant confidence, and stood holding a highball in my parents' living room the same way he stood hip-deep in waders holding a pole—always with the same loose strength. He cast for trout with flies he tied himself, and now and then my brother and I would rise early enough to scramble down to the bank with him, chilly in the faint light. He tried to get me to fish, although the fact that I was a girl didn't encourage him. I was never able to bait a hook without flinching, and flinching annoyed him. He was a dentist, and he fixed our

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teeth in his dark, cold office on Saturdays, without an assistant or anyone else in attendance. After my first visit, I began flinching whenever I was around him.

We would sit on the rocks above and behind him, away from his long, sinewy casts, and watch the white line flicker out across the water, the float bob on the current until it sank, all at once, and the line tautened. Then he would give the pole a few shakes, nothing more, and lean slightly back in his boots and reel in the fish. He silently measured the fingerlings against his big hand and tossed back the ones too young to keep. I wasn't often up that early, and I loved those tender mornings. Mist rose from the surface of the river in tiny clouds, and a fish would leap—*plop*—gone. The rising sun shot hard, bright beams straight down the canyon, east to west. Grandpa never spoke. He swung his arm over his head and flew his line like an arrow to the water.

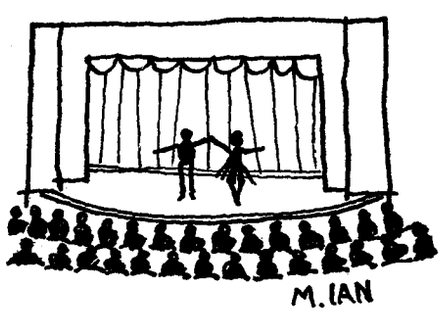
My mother would melt butter in a big cast-iron frying pan, and I would wash the fish and hand them to my father, who gutted each one over a bucket with one slice of a knife. They were fried whole and eaten whole, without a fork: we would hold a transparent lacy tail delicately in one hand and the fish's head in the other, careful of its teeth. The black eyes, stone-clear before cooking, had turned milky-white in the heat; Grandpa would pop them out of his fish and eat them, one by one. I nibbled all the flesh away, like kernels off a corn cob, from one end to the other and back, sitting outside on the porch in the early day, listening to the ratcheting of the jays. And, always, the whispery voice of the river. If we were all quiet at once, we could hear the splash of other fish jumping, looking for flies.

There are few species in the rivers of the Klamath system, compared with other fishing rivers; the cold winters give way to hot summers, the currents are rough, the ride is hard, and the changes in topography are abrupt. Almost all the fish in the Klamath and its rivers are anadromous—salmon and trout and sturgeon. Over the years, mining, road construction, logging, and especially dams have combined against them. The dams on the Snake and the Columbia Rivers do not accommodate fish. Last year, the sockeye-salmon count on the Snake River yielded just one fish. The coho-salmon run on the Snake River is now considered extinct. The salmon and steelhead runs on the Trinity River south of the Klamath dropped ninety per cent in the twenty years after the Lewiston Dam was built to divert water to the Central Valley for irrigation. There is some hope that chinook salmon will return to the Klamath and its tributaries, thanks to a joint project of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Karuk Indians. Rearing ponds have been built, and the young fish are released throughout the system; they will eventually return to the place they were released.

"No one is allowed to fish in either the Klamath or the Salmon before the salmon smoke," Mary Arnold wrote, and continued:

> When the night of the salmon smoke is due to arrive, an old salmon is caught and brought up to the flat above the river. All the next day it burns over a slow fire. One of the old Indians tends the fire and guards the salmon. He must have fasted five days before the ceremonies commence. While the fire burns and the salmon smoke rises in the air, the Kot-e-meen and Pich-pichi Indians go into a large tent and sit there all day. That is, all the men. I think no women are allowed in the tent. The flap of the tent is carefully closed, for if anyone sees the smoke or catches a salmon in the river before the old salmon is entirely consumed, that person will not survive the year. His horse will slip on the trail and he and his horse will fall down the mountain and be crushed on the rocks below, or his boat will miss the landing and he will go over the Great Falls and be drowned, or a rattlesnake will get him, or he will be shot by an irate neighbor. Anyhow, something unpleasant will happen to him.

One afternoon, when I was about ten years old, my brother Bruce and I were diving in the center of the river across from our beach. There was always a channel there, about fifteen feet deep, and the water had a green cast from the bloom of algae and from the silt tossed up by the eddying currents. I was diving with a mask to the bottom, and I found a rock, as tall as I was, resting on the channel floor. The base of the rock had a hollow in it, and in the hollow was a fish. Here was a fish bigger than any I had ever seen: no trout for breakfast, not even a small salmon, like the ones we sometimes had for supper, but a fish longer than my outstretched arms and as wide as my own young body. He was hovering half in and half out of the miniature cave and staring right into my eyes. A salmon about to spawn changes color, grows strange with the truck of breeding. A spawner has given up on a fish's ordinary worries, and lies listless, preoccupied. This fish hovered that way, but there was nothing moribund about him. He simply didn't care about me at all. It was many years before I began to wonder if I'd been looking at one of the last of the sturgeon in the Klamath system, a fish so big it would seem to burst these rocky, narrow streams.



I surfaced and screamed for Bruce, who was lounging on the sand. We trod water and talked, and decided, with a certain forthright courage, to catch that fish for ourselves. We didn't have rods, and I don't think we would have known quite what to do with them anyway. What we had, for some reason, was a rope, and while I hung over the submerged rock to keep watch my brother swam back to fetch it. He was less fearless than I was then (we've since traded places in the matter of nerve), and I knew the onus of capture would be on me. He tied a knot to make a lariat, and tossed it out.

The day was, like all those days, clear and hot and steady and still, smelling of clean water and green trees. I bobbed in the river with the current flowing slowly past, and flicked my feet now and then to stay in one place, holding the rough hemp in my hands. Bruce sat on the beach with his heels dug in and the other end of the rope tight in both hands. I took a deep breath and dove. Bubbles rose one by one, and sound thickened like a porridge in my ears. It was cold, and I sank until I was face to face with the fish as big as I was. I was stung with a sharp sorrow, all alone with Most Sacred Old Man, King Fish, Salmon Spirit. He had probably taken and torn a dozen hooked flies in his time. I thought of his age and potency, and grieved that I had to kill him: "O Supernatural Ones, O Swimmers," the Kwakiutl sang when they began to net the muscled salmon each season, "I beg you to protect me, Swimmer."

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I couldn't possibly have caught such a thing, of course, but I didn't know that then; holding my long, long breath, I kicked closer, lariat at the ready, and he hung in the rock hole, waiting. I kicked even closer, with a shiver of fear at last curling up my spine, and it wasn't until I brushed my hand against his scaly cheek that he shook his tail and was gone in one flicker, gone in the gold-green water for good.

WHEN I was fourteen, I brought my best friend, Karen, to the cabin with me. We planned to swim and sun, and to sprawl on a couch in the cool upstairs reading magazines. We opened up the cabin, filled the pail, changed into our bathing suits, and skipped down the path, to find that the boulders had moved. When Mary Arnold and Mabel Reed watched a winter storm come in, near the turn of the century, they wondered at the flood to come: "Big water, everyone said. This winter, big water." The winter I turned fourteen had been another winter of big water. The beach was narrower, darker, the curve of white water below a little closer. It was all a bit less hospitable, a bit less welcoming. I stared, and mourned as I stood. We jumped from the rocks to the sand, for the jumping of it, but nothing was ever the same. So the heaviest pieces shift. Grandpa Doc—who was not really my grandfather but my grandmother's third husband, and no relative at all—grew a brain tumor. Karen moved away. That fall, without warning or notice, Grandpa sold the cabin to a couple from Los Angeles, who wanted to use it as a vacation home. He sold it complete: couches, silver pail, magazines, iron beds, trunks, and folding Japanese screen.

Mary Arnold and Mabel Reed published their book about the Rivers more than forty years after they left the Northwest, never to return. The moments captured in their two years there stayed clean and clear, like bubbles in a fading sun. Arnold describes a hot summer evening when they sat on their cabin porch and watched the moon come up. An Indian friend of theirs named Les, taciturn and melancholy, arrived with his drum:

> He sat against the house in the bright moonlight with his legs straight out in front of him. We could see the bald mountain back of the house quite clearly. For a time there was no sound but the beat of the drum, and then we heard the bark of a fox. The house and the fence and the garden and beyond them the dark outline of the chaparral stood out very sharp and clear in the moonlight, while above us towered the mountain.

After a time, Les stopped drumming, having heard what he thought was a footstep nearby. He wondered if a witch had tracked him, and he left, without a word, to buy a spell.

I stopped by the cabin a couple of Aprils ago, for the first time in nineteen years. I think I understand Arnold's and Reed's apparent reluctance to make that final record. They knew that there was no need to rush the Rivers into print; they knew that through the floods the Rivers last. For many miles, there had been no cars, only a logging truck crossing the bridge by Kelsey Creek while I threw rocks into the water, and a forest ranger riding a mower across a little square of grass by his station. It was a hot, yellow day. The Scott was low from a dry winter, the great humped stretches of basalt warm from the sun and smelling of mud and fish. I took my time getting to the cabin, but when I got there the crunch of the previous fall's oak leaves and the scent of sugar pine and ivy were exactly what I desired, exactly as I wished. The cabin was closed up, as all these summer cabins are in spring; that's one reason I came to see it then, and not later. I was worried that a witch would track me through the trees, but instead I found that the cabin had been newly painted picnic-red and had grown very small, like a doll's house—so small that I didn't see how it had ever contained all of us. The brave, precarious porch was gone. The river was startlingly near; the bank was gentle now and the water soft and slow. All alone there, with nothing to fear and no etiquette to preserve, I felt myself a trespasser, and I turned away and went back up the driveway to the road.

I have only lately become aware of how I see this land: as carnal and sacred at once. Settlers came here and found not a finished paradise but the parts of one. The dream shifts, as dreams do: here are the raw materials, to be turned into the paradise of industrial, imperial man. He won't be going to the Far East for ivory and silk; he will be going to the Far East to sell his furs and his timber, until the fur is gone and the timber is cut. And

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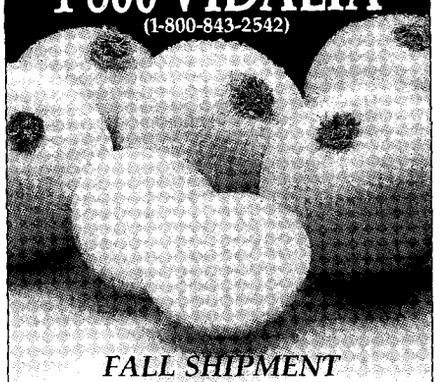

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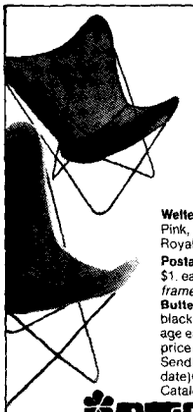

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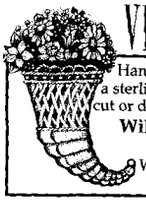

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A D V E R T I S E M E N T

then? Well, something will come up. The West will provide.

So this is my heritage. The dapper, bemused white man stands at the rail of a steamship, a bowler on his head and a cigar in his hand. His wife and his children are still home, back East, waiting for the final settling of accounts. The ship chugs up the river and passes banks on which a few Indians still live among the stumps, scarred by smallpox. He looks at them with pity, and a certain distant kindness. The ship will reach a rapids soon, and the man will have to disembark and board a train, but even the days of trains are numbered. Even the rapids will fill and disappear, like the trees. For now, content with his labor, he gazes upon the new world with the eye of a father gazing on his young, ill-mannered child, knowing that only time can finish a work as great and holy as this one.

Not long ago, I flew from Los Angeles to Portland on a clear day, the sun low and golden pale in a chalky sky. We skimmed with a steady roar up the gentle curve of the Willamette Valley, which runs a hundred miles north and south in Oregon between the Coast Range and the Cascades—up the valley's center, as soft as the line between two breasts. I looked down on domestic bounty, on fertility almost embarrassing in its profusion: pockets of trees scattered among the fields and the winding dark-blue waterways; houses, grouped like tents near an oasis; fields of every shade of green and tan and gold, plowed in perfect rows; a single tree left standing, circled with till lines; hayricks; long, silvery barns. I could see the stubbly corduroy of a Christmas-tree field and the gentle rise of hills to the distant white peak of Mt. Hood. I had come over the giant, arid fields north of Los Angeles—fields scrabbled with hard tractor cuts and separating the houses by miles. That life had looked to me like hard labor, and this one looked like peace. The city glided slowly underneath, braced on all sides by groves of trees and green hills, and I thought that the easiest of lives could be lived there, a life of slow exaltation. After all, the beavers really were as big as bears, once upon a time. The trees stood as tall as the temple of Apollo. And the mountains opened like the wings of a bird and reached miles into the sky.

—Sallie Tisdale

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PERSONAL HISTORY

VISITING THE LAUREATE

IT was a long time ago. I was a poet and living the life of a poet. It was a life of hardship, but in those years (1950-53) I felt the tremendous pull of the bohemian life in London. I had worked on Wordsworth, written a book on Mary Shelley. For a time I edited the *Poetry Review*. I think that almost unconsciously I was moving toward narrative art. One of my greatest pleasures was to read the work of John Masefield, who was then poet laureate.

A poet laureate is always at a disadvantage among the critics of his time. There has never been a truly avant-garde laureate. Some of them have been extremely dull, positively ungifted. Their duties as laureates were to celebrate national events in suitably rousing verse. Not all poets were up to this. Two laureates back from Masefield there had been Alfred Austin, about whom few have since heard. Some of the lines on the last illness of Edward VII which Austin perpetrated are among the most naïvely comical in the history of English letters:

> Across the wire the electric message came:
> "He is no better. He is much the same."

Austin was followed by Robert Bridges, quite a different poet, with a very strong individual view about the limits and scope of the laureateship.

> Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
> Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West . . .

These lines, so well known to anthologists, represent the grand voice and sprung rhythms of Bridges. He rejoiced in the nobility and the splendor of life. When it became John Masefield's turn, he introduced into English poetry something fresh, democratic, colloquial. Masefield was born in 1878 in Herefordshire. He had been trained as a sailor, and as a sailor lad he had rounded Cape Horn on a sailing vessel. Between 1885 and 1887, he worked in a bar in Greenwich Village, in New York, and later he worked in a carpet factory in Yonkers.

He meant, always, to be a writer, and achieved his aim. His verse was full-blooded, non-academic, and brimming with the sap of human experience. His fame reached its height in 1911 with the publication of a long narrative poem with a strong evangelical theme, "The Everlasting Mercy." This was followed by "Dauber," "Reynard the Fox," and other book-length narrative poems of an extremely gripping nature.

The fashion—it could almost be called the passion—for Masefield gradually diminished between the two World Wars. He was still, and he remains, celebrated for his lovely lyric poems, which adorn so many modern anthologies—poems such as "Cargoes":

> Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
> Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
> With a cargo of ivory,
> And apes and peacocks,
> Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

I had been fascinated by Masefield from childhood, when I was taken to hear him read his poems. He was an exceptionally good reader. He gave every vowel, every syllable, full value. To look at, he was slighter than I (and the school friend who accompanied me) had expected. We had thought of him as a rollicky-sailor type, perhaps, like some of the characters in his narrative verse, cursing and swearing. But he was, in fact, rather elegant. He had that directness and simplicity of bearing and performance which are the essence of style. I described that reading, years later, in a book on Masefield:

> It had been told of him that he had sailed round Cape Horn in a terrible storm, that he had had many adventures in South America, and that he was an awful one for swearing. We half-expected the Poet Laureate to be an immense muscular figure wearing perhaps a dark blue polo-necked sweater, sleeves rolled up to show the tattoo marks, or at least we thought would be forthcoming someone like those hearty and rolling merchant seamen who used to breeze up from Leith like waves of the sea themselves, at once to offend and amaze the citizens of Edinburgh. And of course Mr. Masefield turned out to be... shy, fresh complexioned and blue-eyed. He wore then that expression of perpetual surprise which he is still apt to wear, and which many photographs of him will show.

I HAD written to Masefield on November 28, 1950, suggesting the book. Although he was the poet lau-

"I thought we agreed that the dining room was a buffer zone."

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reate and still, in the public mind, the "sailor-poet," by this time he was not very widely read. I felt he was overlooked for the wrong reasons. Masefield replied immediately in his characteristically courteous manner:

> I am much honoured, that you should wish to write about my work, and much touched that you should have read so much of it and continue its friend.
> Would it be too much to ask, that you should first meet and talk to me?

I arranged to visit John Masefield at his house, Burcote Brook, at Abingdon in Berkshire on December 6th. He sent a car to meet me at Oxford Station. It was a freezing day. The snow was deep. Here is the account of my meeting with Masefield which I wrote in my memorandum book.

DECEMBER 8, 1950: In bed with cold which was caught at Abingdon, and I can't help thinking that if Masefield were not so intemperately "Temperant" I would not be snuffling and choking thus—i.e. if he had offered me a drink on frozen Wednesday last. But I have not the heart to blame him, for in all else he is a generous and delightful host.

He has a large house, much larger than I expected, with a lodge and drive. Somehow, I didn't expect to find the atmosphere of comfort and success. A lovely-looking old man. Rosy cheeks, white skin, pure-white hair and moustache, and blue, blue eyes. A charming voice which carefully enunciates all vowels and speaks boldly. First I was shown into his study, which looks out on a long stretch of grass (frosted over on Wednesday) leading to a river running between clumps of trees. There was a large fire, comfortable chairs, into one of which I was put, but M. chose a hard armless chair, which he seemed to prefer (like the Admiral in "Dead Ned"). He asked me kindly about my journey; then spoke about Mary Shelley (on whom I had told him by letter I had written), whom he described as an excellent widow, whatever kind of wife she made. He spoke of Shelley and his admiration for his work, though he (M.) "did not think all priests and kings were evil." Then of Godwin, whom he disliked, he said, although he had read and enjoyed his novels when young. I asked if "Caleb Williams" had influenced "Dead Ned" and he replied, yes, possibly, though he was not aware of it & in fact could not remember the story. The idea of "Dead Ned," he told me, was given him by a story he was told when dining at Barber-Surgeons' Hall. He was informed that the very table at which he was dining was that used formerly by the dissectors of hanged men who had been condemned to be drawn and quartered and exposed to public view. The surgeons who performed this office were under the secret oath of their society to try to restore life whenever one of the hanged bodies showed signs of life (as frequently happened). M. was shown an Oriental screen which had been sent by one of the criminals who had there been revived to his surgeon-benefactors. It was the custom that when this reviving of the hanged took place they were shipped abroad, just like Dead Ned. M. said that his brother had found some papers relating to some criminal who survived hanging, and escaped rehanging through a pardon. These stories went into the making of the novel.

He asked me a little about myself, but did not seem too curious. I told him a few brief details. He said how touched he was by my wishing to write the book, and I told him part of my plan. He said, in reference to "Dauber," that the story was told him exactly as it is recounted in the poem, even to the dying words of the Dauber, "It will go on." He said he did not think much of "Dauber" either way, it was written so long ago. "The Everlasting Mercy," he said, was of course a turning point in his career. (He did not seem keen to talk about his work, and so much that I wanted to ask him will now have to be put to him by letter.)

He spoke then of Rossetti and asked, I think, what is thought of him now. I said there is a tendency to think of him as a languishing aesthete. He said, "Oh, but when I was a young poet we looked upon Rossetti as the life force of poetry. Without Rossetti, Swinburne could not have been, William Morris could not have been, Burne-Jones could not have been." He went out to fetch Mrs. Masefield, whom I shall describe presently, then continued, "Without Rossetti they

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would all have been clergymen—Swinburne would have been a curate." Mrs. M. laughed—a high cackle as is the laugh of the deaf sometimes—and said, "Imagine Swinburne a curate." Masefield then spoke of Rossetti's discovery of FitzGerald and the enormous success of the "Rubaiyat." Every copy was sold and the books were selling at a pound apiece (originally the book was a farthing). The day the copyright was released, about six publishers brought out "Omar," and once again they went into edition after edition.

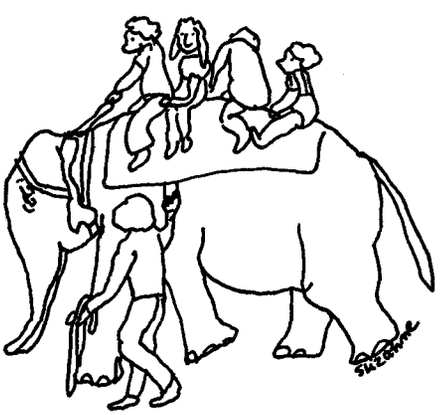
Mrs. Masefield left the study to go and finish her letter, and about ten minutes before lunch we joined her in a smaller room, which had a smaller fire, burning logs and peat. She, too, preferred a low hard chair, as she said she always wanted to fall asleep in a soft chair. She was a small, kindly person, very weird-looking, with an ear apparatus, and glasses that looked as if they covered one glass eye—at least, one eye had a special lens that magnified the eye to look like a marble. She was dressed in an antique black hat trimmed with velvet, a red jersey, and a shortish old-fashioned gray skirt. Her voice was rather appalling, being due no doubt to some deafness. I liked her; and Masefield behaved with natural courtesy toward her. I should think she has been a true companion to him. They talked of their travels from time to time, speaking of the lion farm in Hollywood, which Masefield said was kept specially for film use. He had seen one shot of a film introducing lions and Christians in the Roman arena. The lions were trained not to eat people, only to look fierce, but, he said, the Christians in this particular film would have put any healthy lion off.

We went in to lunch—had some fricassee, very well cooked, accompanied by vegetables and "delights," as Masefield called them. These "delights" were pecan nuts and raisins. During lunch Masefield told me how he had hung round Swinburne's door at Putney as a young man to see the poet—a queer figure, with an aureole of red hair, tripping up Putney Hill. He asked what did I think of Swinburne! I said I appreciated his technique but could not really extend my enjoyment beyond the words. He said that to the young poets at the end of the last century Swinburne seemed to have released the language—he could do anything with language.

Meanwhile, I was feeling rather cold. We were all three provided with a black shiny round oil stove, reaching about 2 ft. But the other side was cold. Anyway, we returned to the smaller drawing room after eating Christmas pudding, which M. said he hoped was my first this year. There, in the smaller room, we had coffee, which M. poured and served; and he was very assiduous in pressing me to further "delights"—fruit, sweets, etc.

Other things he had told me during this time were: that he couldn't get beyond a few pages of "Wuthering Heights," although he admired what Rossetti had said of it ("The action is laid in Hell,—only it seems places and people have English names there"). "Jane Eyre," he said, was considered a wicked book in his youth and his sister was forbidden to read it. He believed, he said, that he read a lot of books in his youth which would have been forbidden him "had they known"; he told me, too, that he thought the present poor sales of poetry were due to the high price of the books. He considered that the theory was wrong which attributed the unpopularity of poetry to inferior work by present-day poets, for, he said, the public for poetry has actually increased; Yeats, he said, estimated the British poetry-reading public at 4,000. Today, there are 1 million BBC listeners to poetry programs.

I left him at 2 P.M.—his car was waiting to take me into Oxford. I left him with a feeling of unexpected warmth. He had given me two of his photographs and his "A Book of Both Sorts," inscribed to me, and had said that he would give me every help with my book. A new autobiographical book by him is appearing in April—first in *The Atlantic Monthly* as a serial—but apart from my use of the material in this book, and from "The Conway" and "In the Mill," he promised to "think up" new material for me.



Throughout, he was most unaffectedly gracious, kind, and sweet—an absolute poppet. I had rather expected to find a denunciatory reactionary somewhat out of sorts with the world & soured by neglect. Not a bit of it. His interest in all varieties of life's manifestations is still avid—much more so than mine or most of my generation's will ever be. The inner life of the ma[n] has not swallowed up the outer life. He is a poet of outwardness—of the essence of reality, not the essence of illusion. A born storyteller (as Herbert Palmer writes). And this is true of his conversation as well as his art.

The car dropped me at Broad Street. It was just before 2:30. I dived into a basement tavern next door to Blackwell's and knocked back a double rum. Even so, I have a cold from my day's excursion.

One of the things I found very charming about Masefield was his interest in my tartan dress, which led him to look up the colors in a book, "Clans & Tartans of Scotland": it is that of the MacKenzies. The war cry was given as "Tulach Ard!," which fascinated Masefield. He repeated it over and over.

December 9th: Masefield also remarked on the true greatness of "Jude the Obscure." I have remembered, too, that Masefield said that the theme of "Dauber" was that the artist is compelled to obey the law of his own being, no matter if death or disaster ensues.

December 9th (evening): I have just remembered more things about my visit to Masefield.

1) He began by asking me if I had a good journey, and had I much trouble getting from my home to Paddington.

2) He admires Peacock's poems, especially mentioning "The Three Wise Men" and "War Song."

3) Re: "Dead Ned"—he said he ha[d] a special interest in the Coast of Dead Ned, about which it is said,

> Beware, beware, the Bight of Benin,
> *Few come out, though many go in.*

4) He said that recently he had been reading some of Tom Moore's poems, and found some of them surprisingly good, though, he said, "we used to mock them."

5) He spoke about the suitability of the apron stage to Elizabethan drama.

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He wondered why the Roman theatre at Verulamium had not been used for theatre purposes—for some open-air drama. Why not a circus? "Bertram Mills at the Roman Theatre," he said half humorously.

6) When I told him I sometimes take a part-time job he said, "All experience is good for an artist." I felt flattered by the "artist" bit.

I WROTE to thank the Masefields for their kindness. Masefield replied, reiterating the effect of Rossetti and Swinburne on a young poet like himself:

Swinburne meant much to my generation: he was literary: he adored the French masters, who were then our masters in all things: he was generous beyond most poets, in his praise and likings: he was one of the real discoverers of Blake: he could write exquisite verse in an age of exquisite verse: he laid us all at his feet with half a dozen things which I cannot read without emotion now. He was one of the first romantic modern poets to be read by me: and Chastelard, to a boy, is all that the heart can desire and the lines on the death of Baudelaire all that genius and grief can utter.

He ended the letter hoping that the cry of "Tulach Ard!" would continue to echo up the Old Brompton Road (where I lived).

MASEFIELD was seventy-two when I met him, and at that time recovering from a serious illness. But he always found time to reply to my queries and to make helpful suggestions. When my book was finally completed I know he was pleased with it. He wrote:

Please let me thank you for the patient care with which you have worked at my things, & for the generous things you have written.

Please forgive me, will you, if I add, after these thanks, (so well deserved by you), that I find a book about myself most difficult to read. "What a pity," I keep saying, "that this Lady had not a better subject."

—MURIEL SPARK

•

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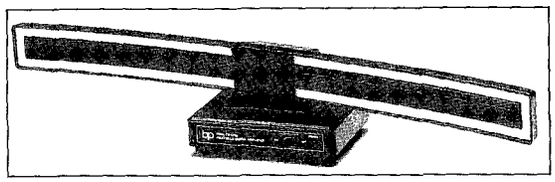

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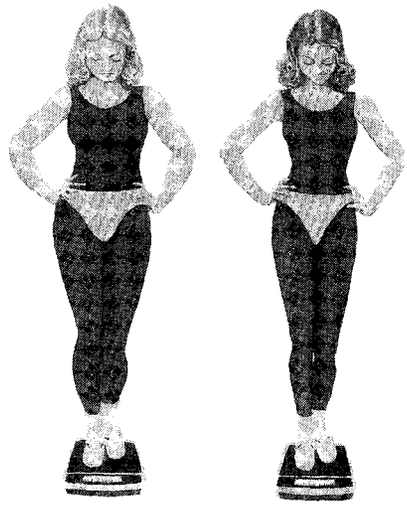

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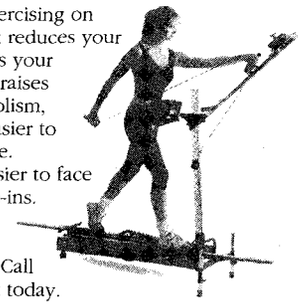

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

Dubliners

ALAN PARKER'S "The Commitments" is a loose, friendly musical comedy about the brief career of an Irish soul band. The Commitments are the brainchild of an energetic young music enthusiast named Jimmy Rabbitte (Robert Arkins), who lives with his parents in a row house in Dublin's Northside—a neighborhood that could be called working class, if only (as one character points out) there were any work. Jimmy's first recruits are his old friends Outspan (Glen Hansard) and Derek (Kenneth McCluskey), a pair of amiable dimwits who play guitar and bass in a staggeringly inept rock group. Jimmy corners them between sets at a wedding reception and has no trouble firing them up with his messianic vision of "Dublin soul"; they are not, perhaps, entirely sure what he's talking about, but it sounds more exciting than what they've been doing, so they're happy to count themselves in. (Every visionary needs a core of fuzzy-headed, easily persuadable acquaintances to help him get his grand projects started.) At the reception, a beefy, ponytailed young man, drunk out of his mind, grabs the microphone and belts out some raunchy, passionate rock and roll before pitching, insensate, off the edge of the stage. The outrageous performance makes a big impression on Jimmy; later, after searching vainly for a lead singer, he tracks down this lurching behemoth of blue-eyed soul, whose name is Deco (Andrew Strong), and persuades him to join the group. For backup singers Jimmy turns to a girl he knows named Bernie (Bronagh Gallagher). She's rather plain, and not obviously talented, but Jimmy knows that she's a friend of blond, leggy Imelda Quirke (Angeline Ball); toward the end of his conversation with Bernie he suggests, with transparently false nonchalance, that she might talk to Imelda about the band, just see if she'd be interested. Bernie enlists Imelda and another acquaintance, Natalie (Maria Doyle). Thus, the Commitmentettes, whose functions are many. Besides providing vocal support for Deco, they also (not at all incidentally) give the band some desperately needed sex appeal, and they supply the other musicians with a little extra incentive to show up at rehearsals. Clearly, Jimmy knows what he's doing. Soul, he's fond of saying, is "the rhythm of sex." In this sort of music, artistic integrity and the desire to get laid are pretty much inseparable.

For positions that Jimmy can't fill from among his Northside chums and their acquaintances, he places a classified ad in a local paper: "Have you got soul? If so, the World's Hardest Working Band is looking for you." Dozens of eager Dublin kids appear at his door, professing allegiance to such soul giants as Joni Mitchell, Spandau Ballet, and (inevitably) Sinéad O'Connor. Jimmy slams the door on most of them, and rejects others after some bizarre auditions. One young man sings an original composition based on the idea that "Elvis was a Cajun," and this sentiment does not sit well with Jimmy's dad (Colm Meaney), a long-sideburned worshipper of the King. (In the Rabbittes' parlor, a framed portrait of Elvis hangs above one of the Pope.) Somehow, out of this chaos Jimmy manages to come up with players to complete the band. Among the members unearthed by the ad is a trumpet player named Joey Fagan (Johnny Murphy), a scruffy, balding, fiftyish man who claims to have just returned to Ireland after years on the road in America. Joey the Lips, as he likes to be called, casually lays out a mind-boggling set of credentials: he has played, he says, with Otis Redding, B. B. King, Wilson Pickett, Joe Tex, even the Beatles (the fanfare on "All You Need Is Love"). Without knowing how much, if any, of Joey's name-dropping to believe, Jimmy takes him gratefully into the group. Joey's a weird cat—he lives with his elderly mum and talks in born-again rhetoric—but his age, his evident musical knowledge, and his mellow evangelical style confer on him a certain air of authority. He becomes the group's guru: he gives the Commitments their name, instructs them in the theory and practice of soul, and serves as the final arbiter of all musical, spiritual, and sartorial issues.

It's characteristic of this movie's sly spirit that the voice of wisdom and experience is represented by someone as ambiguous as Joey the Lips. He inspires the band with stories that probably shouldn't be believed, crackpot homilies, and embarrassingly blatant motivation exercises: at the end of the Commitments' first, wretched rehearsal, he makes the kids form a circle and pat each other on the back. Joey the Lips embodies a potent mixture of conviction and blarney—just as Jimmy is simultaneously a purist and an opportunist. When, for example, Jimmy pumps up the confidence of his white soul musicians by declaring "The Irish are the blacks of Europe" and encouraging them to chant "Say it

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loud, 'I'm black and I'm proud,' " we recognize that this ideological justification for his project is both heartfelt and calculated: he'll say, or do, just about anything to keep the band together. "The Commitments" understands that the first and last principle of popular art is "Whatever works," and the acceptance of this truth allows Alan Parker and his cast to find fresh, original humor in the story of a bunch of Irish kids who learn to play soul.

The movie is based on a very funny, slangy novel by a young Dublin schoolteacher named Roddy Doyle. (The screenplay is credited to Dick Clement, Ian La Frenais, and Doyle.) The book is short and speedy, and it's almost all dialogue: the slender narrative flows along on a current of hilarious foulmouthed banter. The movie retains quite a few of the novel's sharpest lines, and, more important, it also retains Doyle's no-big-deal approach to the material. Like the novel, the movie gives us a vivid picture of Dublin's poverty and urban blight, but it's more interested in capturing the rhythm of the characters' wit than in showing us how oppressed they are. Neither Doyle nor Parker puts the Commitments in the position of pleading for our sympathy. Out of respect for the characters, everything is played strictly for laughs: if we want to see something touching or brave in the kids' exuberance, that's our business. And "The Commitments" isn't a success story in the conventional sense; it isn't about the triumphs and tragedies of youngsters with big show-biz dreams. (That is to say, no one in the movie is likely to remind you of the teen heroes and heroines of Parker's obnoxious, overbearing 1980 musical "Fame.") Most of the Commitments don't aspire to much more than becoming a solidly competent pub band and having some fun. They do get pretty good, in their own modest terms. Eventually, they're able to play precise and spirited versions of soul hits in the Memphis style: the rhythm section is steady and driving; the horns deliver their punchy riffs in perfect unison; the girls move and shake seductively, in high heels and foxy black cocktail dresses; and Deco, grimacing soulfully, shouts and growls his way through the melody. Their audiences enjoy them, and so do we, because the movie keeps their achievement in perspective. We're not required to see them as a great band or to overvalue their musical and cultural significance. "Dublin soul," Jimmy's lofty-sounding phrase, turns out not to be a revolutionary synthesis of black music and Irish sensibility: the Commitments' music is familiar, classic soul played absolutely straight, but by Dubliners. Their lack of originality doesn't prevent them from being enormously entertaining. The band's hard-won proficiency charms us, perhaps more than a really ambitious group's would.

In any event, the movie concentrates (as the novel does) on the process of the band's evolution rather than on the product. Parker shows us the day-to-day details of the Commitments' rehearsals and performances; he seems to revel in the complexity of the group's musical, emotional, and sexual interactions, and he does full comic justice to the petty irritations of life in a band. The Commitments are in a constant state of turmoil, but their crises are all small-scale, believably mundane. Deco proves to have a few personality flaws: he makes crude remarks to the girls, sulks when he isn't the center of attention, and generally treats the other Commitments contemptuously, as if they were merely his backup band. (Onstage, he's so oblivious of them that he's actually dangerous: at their first public performance, he bumps one of the Commitmentettes off the stage and then, swinging the mike stand wildly, manages to short out the sound system and nearly kill the bass player.) His elephantine ego is the Commitments' most serious problem, but it's hardly the only threat to their tenuous harmony. Jimmy is putting out little fires everywhere: Imelda may have to miss a gig because it conflicts with a family holiday; Billy, the drummer (Dick Massey), has quit, because he's afraid Deco will drive him to murder, and Jimmy has to find a replacement; the flaky sax player, Dean (Félim Gormley), starts sporting dark glasses and what Joey scornfully calls a "jazz haircut," and has to be restrained from dropping showy bebop solos into the band's tight arrangements; the "security expert," a head-butting punk named Mickah (Dave Finnegan), has a tendency to get carried away in the course of his duties, turning trivial crowd disturbances into full-blown rumbles (he persists in his enthusiastic brand of enforcement even after he's been

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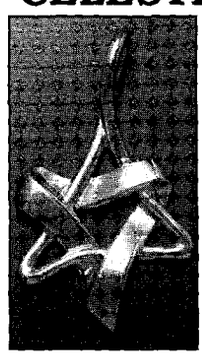

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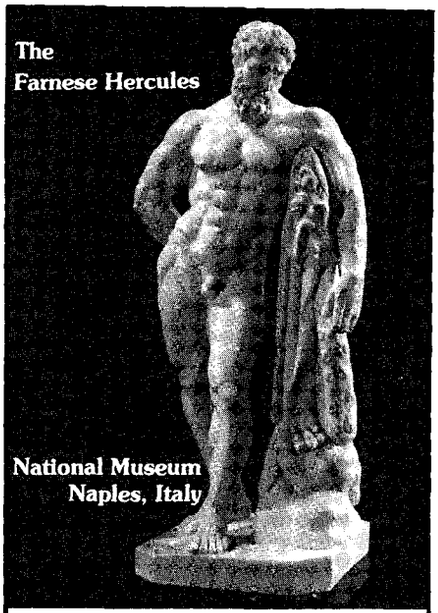

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pressed into service as Billy's replacement); and Joey, of all people, sparks a divisive sexual competition among the Commitmentettes. As with most creative activity (most human activity, for that matter), the struggle to keep a group of people together is just one damn thing after another, and there's so much of this maddening, unpredictable everyday stuff going on that nobody—not the band, not the filmmakers, not the audience—has time to ponder the larger meaning of it all.

Until the Commitments finally collapse under the accumulated weight of their diverse minor problems, what holds them together is a combination of Jimmy's not overscrupulous ingenuity, their common pleasure in making music, and the daily challenge of responding to their fellow band members' provocations with quick, profane wit. The rhythm of the kids' ragging of each other is thrillingly fast and varied. Their verbal sparring in this picture is another kind of music—maybe the true sound of Dublin soul. And the cast that Parker has assembled to give us an earful of this distinctive noise is extraordinary. With the exception of Johnny Murphy and Bronagh Gallagher, none of the movie's Commitments are professional actors: they're young Dublin musicians (of different styles and levels of renown) who answered a casting-call advertisement. On the stage and off, they're a miraculously vivacious and spontaneous crew, and they don't smooth off the rough edges of their characters with actorish technique. Even Robert Arkins, who has the largest and trickiest role, maintains an easy, relaxed manner throughout. He carries the picture for long stretches without ever seeming intimidated by his responsibility; he's as coolly resourceful as the character he plays. Parker deserves a lot of credit for the way his young ensemble performs in "The Commitments." Using inexperienced actors in comedy is probably tougher than using them in drama, because the timing of jokes is so important, but the laughs in this picture arrive with exquisite precision: they come in right on cue, as if they had just sprung naturally out of the overall texture, like the horn parts in a well-played soul arrangement.

Parker doesn't quite manage to sustain the picture's offhand, unassuming grace all the way through. Toward the end, in a long sequence in which the band's final performance is intercut with offstage action that brings the Commitments' many small problems to a head, the movie begins to seem, for the first time, a little pushy. The editing of the musical numbers gets more frenzied, as if to magnify the excitement of what's happening onstage. Parker wants to be sure that we don't miss the irony that the Commitments are having their finest hour as musicians while the group is, in every other respect, coming apart. That's not, in itself, a terrible idea, but it has the effect of seducing Parker into some uncharacteristic (for this picture) visual hyperbole. And, probably for the same reason, he also succumbs to a lapse of musical judgment. Throughout the movie, the music that the Commitments are given to perform seems to have been selected with unusual care and intelligence. The songs are genuinely great ones (drawn largely from the repertoires of Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, and Wilson Pickett), and, more important, they're ones that a young, white, European band can put across convincingly, with vigor, high spirits, and enough musicianship to create a danceable beat. For the climax of the Commitments' final set, though, Parker puts them to work on a number that's beyond their abilities: Otis Redding's slow, extravagantly emotional "Try a Little Tenderness," a soul aria that requires a virtuoso singer—and a mature virtuoso, at that. Andrew Strong, who was only sixteen when "The Commitments" was filmed, does a terrific job with most of the other songs—especially the up-tempo numbers, in which his youthful energy is completely winning. But his "Try a Little Tenderness" is strained, full of Joe Cocker-like mannerisms; he doesn't sound like Otis Redding, and, worse, he doesn't sound like himself. The movie recovers quickly from this failed epiphany, though. The narrative returns to its natural state of word-drunk chaos, and the Commitments, entropically, drift back to their individual lives. Deco remains a jerk to the very end; Joey exits lying; nobody dies a violent death; nobody sings "A Change Is Gonna Come." "The Commitments" leaves us on a note of blissful irresolution, and that may be the most soulful thing about it.

—Terrence Rafferty

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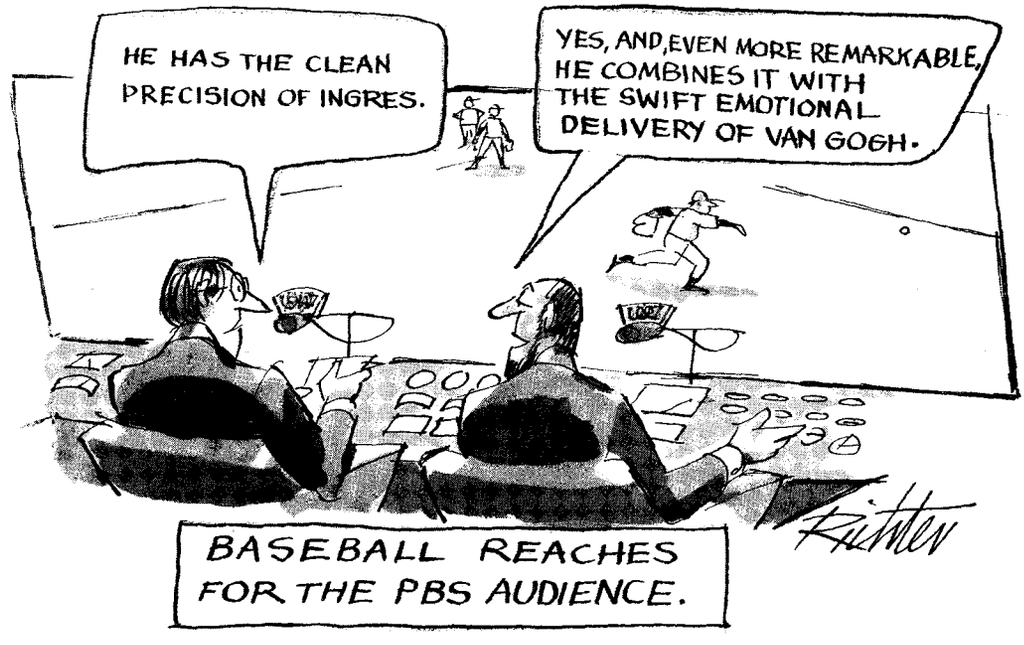
AROUND CITY HALL

Low Hopes

TWENTY years ago or so, at public hearings at City Hall white witnesses would routinely threaten that if they were not given what they were demanding—legislation, administrative rulings, public funds—they and all their friends would move out of town. Black witnesses, many of whom wore dashikis in those days, would threaten, when their turns came, that if they didn't get what they wanted the city was in for a long, hot summer—shorthand for the racial rioting in America's urban centers which is one of the saddest memories of that era. So many whites did move out of New York that, according to the 1990 census, the city, sixty per cent white in 1970, is for the first time under fifty per cent white—that is, non-Hispanic white. However, so many immigrants—mostly "people of color," as they are now usually referred to at City Hall, by Mayor David Dinkins and others—moved into town in the last decade that they have not only replaced the numbers of departed whites but increased the population by three hundred thousand over what it was in 1980. While the percentage of black residents—twenty-seven per cent—is only about two points higher than it was in 1980, the percentages of Hispanics and, particularly, Asians have risen sharply; and more than thirty per cent of present-day New Yorkers were born in another country. Yet here, as in most American cities, blacks, more than other nonwhite groups, have found places in—or, at least, on the fringes of—the establishment, most often the urban-government establishment. When Dinkins was sworn in as mayor, in January, 1990, New York was one of the last major American cities to put a black in charge at City Hall. Whatever their personal histories, African-Americans whose responsibility it would be to rebuild burned-out neighborhoods the rioters leave behind are not likely to respond well to threats of long, hot summers. Dinkins was never a dashiki wearer—indeed, just trying to imagine the Mayor, whose trademark has become his faultless couture, in such an outfit could turn into a comedy routine—and New York was not one of the cities in which large areas were left in ruins by the urban riots of a quarter century ago. Still, few blacks or other city dwellers need reminders that neighborhoods of some cities—Detroit, for example—have not recovered even yet from those tumultuous times.

The country did have a reminder that there are happy exceptions. In June, the United States Conference of Mayors awarded Newark, one of the areas most devastated by riots, first place in a competition to choose America's most livable cities. The news of the award was given prominent play in the *Times*, the ultimate local establishment publication, which must have been especially gratifying to Newark's former mayor Kenneth Gibson. In recent years, Gibson, who was Newark's first black mayor, has frequently mentioned the fact that as soon as he became mayor the *Times* closed down its Newark bureau; he admits, though, that the paper claims that the move was strictly coincidental and a matter of financial retrenchment. Like other older black politicians who had to beat their way into the white-dominated world, Gibson sometimes suggests that young blacks who are making it in government and other fields nowadays—including, no doubt, those who are present in considerable numbers at New York's City Hall, now that this city has a black mayor—and who sometimes complain of being "disrespected," or "dissed," don't know the half of it. After Gibson was elected Newark's mayor, he was invited to be interviewed at one of the *Times* editors' celebrated luncheons. During the meal, one of the editors, he reports, asked him what he thought of LeRoi Jones. According to Gibson, he said, "I think he's a fine poet, but why do you call him LeRoi Jones when his name is Amiri Baraka?" The editor's answer, as Gibson likes to tell it, was "We call him LeRoi because that's what his mama named him." To which Gibson insists that he responded gleefully, "So what do you call the Pope?"

Last week, the *Times* prominently featured an article about Baraka's challenging of the filmmaker Spike Lee's plans for making a movie about the life of Malcolm X, on the ground that Lee is a middle-class black, was not involved in the black fight for civil rights, and is part of "a retrograde movement in this country." In the article, the *Times* did not once mention that Baraka's name had been LeRoi Jones. It was Lee who, in an interview with Harlem's *Amsterdam News*, went into the matter of names, declaring that he was no further removed from Malcolm X than Baraka was, having been eight years old when Malcolm X was assassinated in this city, in 1965, while Baraka, he said, "was LeRoi Jones, then living with a white woman in Greenwich Village," and "only went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running to Harlem after Malcolm was dead." And Lee demanded, "Who appointed Baraka chairman of the African-American arts committee?" Thus blacks have moved so far toward the mainstream that a standoff between black artists which a couple of decades back would have attracted little more attention than an average dispute on a Harlem street corner may now be treated as major news. Though Dinkins has not taken sides in the quarrel, it seems likely that he would go with Lee, who campaigned strongly for him in the 1989 mayoral election. There were political commentators at the time, however, who mistakenly predicted that Dinkins would be done in by Lee's "Do the Right Thing," released that June: white voters, whose support he needed, would be frightened away from a black candidate because of the film's apparent endorsement of black violence—in the torching of an Italian-American pizzeria in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn on the hottest day of the year.

IT'S hardly news that when the weather is very hot, especially in a crowded city, there will be violence. In New York, last year's murder rate of six a day (twenty-two hundred and forty-five in all) has continued (and in one twenty-four-hour period last month there were seventeen), even though, in a move that badly strained its already default-threatened finances, the city last spring launched a nearly two-billion-dollar program to hire more police and, in addition, to shift more of them away from desks and out of air-conditioned squad cars into the community. (Not their community, for the most part. The majority of the twenty-seven thousand members of the force, which is eleven per cent black, go home at night to the leafy suburbs.) In scorching weather, tempers are short, more New Yorkers are out on the streets, often carrying guns, and thus more people, including children, are killed by bullets intended for someone else as they sit on stoops or get too close to open windows in search of a breeze. In a two-month period beginning on July 22nd of last year, twenty-two children were hit by gunfire, and six died, three of them under four years old. In a ten-hour period early this month, six children were shot, and three died. It was the violent deaths of children that led to last summer's "DAVE, DO SOMETHING" headline in the *Post*, an early cry for leadership from the city's new mayor—something that, except for speeches and ceremonial gestures meant to be reassuring, was already being seen as painfully absent.

One of the more benign pieces of local news—and there hasn't been much of that lately—involved a drop in the rate at which local cops have been cut down. A frequent complaint against Dinkins is that he spends so much time playing tennis (an hour and a half each morning), going to black-tie dinners (several an evening), and presiding over minor ceremonial events at City Hall that he has little time left to govern the city. Last April, Tom Robbins, of the *Daily News*, reported that a statistical study of the Dinkins schedule for the first three months of the year bore this out. In an angry six-page response, Dinkins reminded the *News* that the ceremonies referred to included attending the funerals of police officers. If he was referring to the funerals of policemen killed in the line of duty, he misremembered. For all the intense concern over crime here during his first year as mayor, no city policeman was killed in the line of duty, and well into August of his second year at City Hall that welcome circumstance has continued—although, of course, it could tragically change at any time. The list of cops killed—when there was such a list—regularly made large headlines, as the result of pronouncements from the Police Department and the police union, but the recent good news has not been mentioned; it would be cynical to speculate that this had anything to do with the fact that in budget and salary negotiations the dangers of policing the city's savage streets is an important bargaining chip. According to the latest numbers, these perils are far less formidable for New York's policemen than for the New Yorkers they are paid to protect.

The relationship between hot weather and violence is not, of course, merely a municipal phenomenon. International wars often break out in August or shortly thereafter: Consider "The Guns of August" and the title of W. H. Auden's poem on the start of the Second World War (it begins "I sit in one of the dives/On Fifty-second Street"), "September 1, 1939." This is the second August in a row that White House reporters have spent chasing President Bush around the Kennebunkport golf course trying to figure out whether relations between Iraq and the United States (along with its allies) are likely to take a violent turn. Governor Mario ("I have no plans to run for President and no plans to make plans") Cuomo, who is a native of this city's borough of Queens, keeps insisting that Bush's preoccupation with foreign crises is a wonderfully convenient distraction from having to deal with domestic crises, especially what should be done to help New York and other embattled American cities—which, of course, would be a major part of Cuomo's constituency if he were to change his mind and make a run for the Presidency. (Robert Squier, the political consultant, has described Cuomo as "the great tease mare" of Democratic politics. The *News* columnist Lars-Erik Nelson's comment on that was "I could describe what a tease mare does, but somebody would punch me in the mouth.") Just in case, New York G.O.P. leaders are getting set to use against Cuomo what the Governor has called their party's "mythology" about the Persian Gulf victory. Last month, William Powers, the state G.O.P. chairman, sent out a fund-raising letter in which he urged Republicans to send money, so that the Party could "draw a line in the sand" against Cuomo, the way Bush "stopped a tyrant in his tracks" in the Gulf.

New York has a special interest in 1992, whether or not the city has a local contender, since Democrats will be holding their convention here next July. Last month, Governor Bill Clinton, of Arkansas, a probable contender, said that the Democrats had made a mistake in agreeing to meet here, because people in the rest of the country, as they watch the proceedings, will associate the Democrats with all of New York's worst problems. Cuomo's response was to declare that if Clinton had indeed said that, he was, politically, "a dead man," since he would be "laughed out of every major city in the country"—which is by no means a certainty. Having laid into Clinton, however, Cuomo then said approximately the same thing, predicting that the Republicans "will try to picture the most distressing parts of New York by . . . trying to create a Willie

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Horton or Boston Harbor type of association."

MOST New Yorkers were giving little thought this month to any bad news that next July might bring as they considered the similarities between the events involving racial violence in two Brooklyn neighborhoods—Canarsie, this summer, and Bensonhurst, two years ago. It was on August 23, 1989, three weeks before the Democratic mayoral primary, that—in an event that has developed a mythology of its own—a black teen-ager, Yusuf Hawkins, was attacked and killed by a band of young residents of heavily Italian-American Bensonhurst who mistakenly believed that he had come there to meet a local white girl. This demonstration that ethnic relations in the city that Edward Koch, Dinkins' City Hall predecessor and his opponent in the primary, had been in charge of for nearly twelve years had fallen so low that a young black man could not stop off in a white neighborhood without fatal results undoubtedly helped Dinkins win the primary. During the months after the killing, the Reverend Al Sharpton and his supporters led a series of marches through Bensonhurst, incursions that involved some violence, and the waving of watermelons by spectators at the mostly black visitors.

Lately, Sharpton has been moving in somewhat different circles. In June, he turned up at a fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-plate Republican fund-raiser in the nation's capital, at which the President was the main speaker, as a guest of the singer James Brown, recently released from a South Carolina jail where he had served a term for aggravated assault. By August, Sharpton was back in his old mode, shouting "No justice, no peace!" as he and his followers marched again in Brooklyn, this time in Canarsie, a working-class neighborhood on the borough's eastern rim, bordering Jamaica Bay. In 1980, Canarsie was ninety per cent white—mostly Italian-American and Jewish—and now it is about twenty-five per cent black and Hispanic. In the first two weeks of July, there were some fifteen examples of what the police have officially labelled bias crimes—more than the number reported in all of last year. The crimes included assaults and beatings of blacks by whites and two firebombings of a real-estate office that had tried to sell houses to blacks. Most of the violence was directed by whites against blacks, but early this month there were several black attacks on white victims.

Although Dinkins held a number of rallies last year calling for racial unity, he has not taken an active role as a healer in any racial confrontation. When blacks boycotted and harassed the owner of a Korean market in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, vowing to drive him out of business—as they eventually did—the Mayor remained substantially on the sidelines. On August 7th, however, he helicoptered out to Canarsie, met with blacks and whites for two hours, and appointed a so-called Unity Committee before helicoptering back. Three days later, Sharpton and more than three hundred fellow-protesters arrived in Canarsie. About the same number of spectators lined the sidewalks, some of them shouting "White Power!" and "Go back to Africa!" Sharpton, who had urged blacks not to vote for Dinkins in the last election, blamed the Mayor for stirring up the neighborhood. Some of the spectators waved watermelons at the marchers. One of the marchers ducked into a grocery store, emerged with a box of Ronzoni spaghetti, and waved it back. (Possibly a learned dissertation will one day be written on the symbolism of food in racial protests; in the Korean-market dispute, blacks taunted the Koreans with cries of "Fortune cookies! Fortune cookies!") One thing was different: Sharpton had become such a celebrity that—although no one asked for his autograph—some Canarsie residents rushed toward him with their cameras to get his picture. Four days earlier, Sharpton had been on the dais at a bachelor party for the comedian Jackie Mason, who, as a campaign adviser to Dinkins' Republican opponent, Rudolph Giuliani, in the 1989 mayoral election, had described Dinkins as "a fancy schwarzer with a mustache." Dinkins did not attend the party, but one of the guests was Milton Mollen, his deputy mayor for public safety. Others were New York City Council President Andrew Stein; Koch's police commissioner, Benjamin Ward; Brendan Byrne, the former governor of New Jersey; and Henry Kissinger, whose dance card that week also included a party for Britain's former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

The day after the Sharpton demon-

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stration, about two hundred members of civil-rights groups, black and white, held a candlelight march in Canarsie, singing "We Shall Overcome" and urging more understanding between the races. Though the Reverend Al was not present, some of the white spectators held signs that said "End Racism—Kill Al Sharpton." One young white Canarsie resident urged all blacks to stay out of the neighborhood, since "nothing changes, none of them want to work, they're all on welfare, everybody knows that." However, Canarsie real-estate companies had pointed out that the blacks who were buying in the neighborhood were putting up as much as a quarter of a million dollars, far more than the longtime residents could afford. In Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever," about an interracial romance, the black member of the pair is more affluent and better educated than the Italian-American girl from Bensonhurst he takes up with. Some things do change: many of the people who live in Bensonhurst and Canarsie would find it hard to adjust to the news that a recent guest list had included both the Reverend Al and a former Secretary of State. Early in the morning of August 11th, the police arrested a white Canarsie resident in one of the firebombing incidents. The young man, who when he was driven away in the squad car was wearing a "Button Your Fly" T-shirt, was said to be famous in the neighborhood for his imitation of Rodney Dangerfield's "I Get No Respect" routine.

ON August 15th, the Century Research Corporation released a poll that pitted Dinkins, whose most recent approval rating had been thirty-two per cent, against an array of local political figures. It showed that if the 1993 mayoral election were held this summer Dinkins would lose to Giuliani by a margin of forty-eight per cent to twenty-eight per cent, and to City Council President Stein, a Democrat, by thirty-eight per cent to twenty-nine. He would win, however, over onetime mayor Jimmy Walker, who in 1932 resigned his office in disgrace. "The incumbent's vital signs are weak, to say the least" was the comment of Century's president, Albert Ungar, though he added that there was still time for Dinkins to recoup. On such bad days, the Mayor and the people close to him must sometimes warm themselves on the memory of January 1, 1990, the happy day, full of high hopes, when he was inaugurated on the steps of City Hall. Only four years earlier, he had been jubilant over being sworn in to the far less elevated post of Manhattan borough president. In January, 1990, no spoilsports brought up the matter of another part of that 1986 ceremony, when to Edward Koch the City Hall scene must have looked something like El Dorado—all golden light and abundance. He had just been elected to a third mayoral term, with seventy-eight per cent of the vote, and his vow to be mayor "forever," as he had often liked to put it, seemed a not necessarily idle boast. Nine days after that inauguration came the first word of the municipal scandals, and the beginning of Koch's downward slide into political oblivion. The decline of the high hopes that many New Yorkers had for a Dinkins administration was not so precipitate, but it has been steady. His hold on the office was, from the beginning, more precarious than was generally realized. Though he had taken fifty-one per cent of the vote in the Democratic primary, in the general election he won over Giuliani by only forty-seven thousand votes out of 1.9 million cast. When Dinkins learned that Giuliani's supporters at Republican headquarters on Election Night had booed his name, his comment was that the Giuliani people would simply have to understand that for the next four years "*I* am going to be the mayor of New York." At the time, many took this as an encouraging example of the newly elected mayor's calm self-confidence. This summer, a reminder that a Dinkins regime still has twenty-eight months to go causes some of his constituents to fall into deep fits of depression. A *Post* cartoon last spring showed a man in the background being held up as two New Yorkers sit grimly on a park bench, one of them reading a newspaper whose headline is "DINKINS TO ISSUE 7,000 PINK SLIPS," and saying, "I wish we could give *him* a pink slip!!!"

It was not until after Dinkins moved into City Hall that most New Yorkers began to realize how little they knew of their new mayor and how sparse had been his experience in governing or in citywide politics before he took charge of running a city of more than seven million people, with a budget of twenty-nine billion dollars. His previous public career had consisted of patronage jobs—president of the Board of Elections, city clerk—that had come his way thanks to his membership in Harlem's George Washington Carver Democratic Club, of which his father-in-law, Daniel Burrows, had been a prominent member. His victory at the polls, on his third try, for the office of Manhattan borough president almost certainly came about because Stein, who beat him the first two times, had decided to move up to the citywide office of president of the City Council. Dinkins' political involvement had been strictly local—limited to Harlem and the rest of Manhattan—even in matters of black political empowerment. He had taken no part in the civil-rights movement in the South, although on St. Patrick's Day this year some New Yorkers might have thought he had. Marching boldly with a contingent of gay Irish-Americans, whose right to march had originally been denied them by parade officials, the Mayor not only was booed by Irish-Americans on the sidelines but had some beer cans thrown at him. Dinkins' comment on the attack was "It had to remind you of Birmingham." This, of course, did not make any direct claim that he had been under siege in Alabama in the nineteen-sixties, but some who heard it from a black leader who is now one of the closest American allies of Nelson Mandela might have got that impression.

The ubiquity of references to Dinkins as a one-term mayor presumably encouraged his administration to lay plans for a big speech, to be given on July 30th. It was the fifth time since he moved into City Hall that he had asked local television stations to preëmpt their evening shows to carry a speech of his in its entirety. The first, in May of 1990, was an address calling for racial harmony in the city; in October, there was the presentation of his plan for a beefed-up police force. This year, there was his state-of-the-city message in January and his so-called doomsday-budget message in May. No previous mayor had requested even one block of evening television time, nor had any speech by Cuomo, the Great Communicator, been accorded such treatment here. For a man of famously modest

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demeanor, Dinkins has demonstrated a strong sense of prerogative. Three of the earlier speeches partly replaced the local evening news on CBS, NBC, and ABC. In the case of the budget message, all three stations granted it prime-time exposure, beginning at 7:15 P.M., even though the Mayor's request came during sweeps month, that critical network-television period. As one network official explained the decision, if the stations didn't go along, some black leaders (though not Dinkins himself, at least directly) would accuse them of dissing New York's first black mayor. For the July 30th speech, the network stations, which have budget problems of their own, rejected Dinkins' request for prime time and went with their lucrative "Family Feud," "Entertainment Tonight," and "Wheel of Fortune," giving the Mayor instead nineteen minutes beginning at five-fifteen. Dinkins delivered the speech sitting at his office desk, in front of the fireplace, with an American flag at his side, Presidential style.

The speech described this period as "the most critical time in the history of the city." A new Dinkins program, which he called Reform and Renaissance ("No single program has ever been as important to the future of New York City") would result in "a government more responsive, more realistic, and more caring than any other municipal government in the history of the United States." The speech quoted Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, James Madison, Robert Frost, and Walt Whitman. The Mayor's proposals included a requirement that members of city agencies cut down on official travel and on new office furniture. Moreover, he said, "I announce tonight that I will not accept a salary increase for the next year." In the days that followed, he often referred solemnly to this move as a symbol for New Yorkers of his administration's dedication to retrenchment—not, apparently, understanding the outrage New Yorkers would feel if, after months of mayoral pronouncements on the city's financial straits and the need for such deep cuts in services and jobs that they would darken many local lives, he had announced an increase in his hundred-and-thirty-thousand-dollar-a-year salary. In his speech he promised that various programs to privatize certain government responsibilities would be studied. Also to be studied were cost-cutting work rules for city employees, although the administration had been negotiating since last fall for some concessions—any concessions—from the city-employee unions and had been entirely unsuccessful. Well received, however, was his announcement that funds would be allotted to restore to the budget the delivery of meals to the elderly and the picking up of garbage from street corners on Sundays. Also, city swimming pools, instead of closing in mid-August, would stay open through Labor Day. A question did arise as to whether the Mayor deserved wide commendation for restoring programs he had cut from the budget only four weeks earlier. Most local editorial writers gave him credit for trying, but *Newsday* wondered why the Mayor had not "*one* concrete plan" to talk about.

Proving that he was open to suggestions, Dinkins announced in his speech that on August 5th he would be in his office the whole day "to meet with New Yorkers who want to speak about how we can change our city," adding, "Face to face. One on one." Actually, he met face to face with relatively few of his constituents. The day after the speech, it was announced that most of the people interested in being helpful would be seen by commissioners, deputy mayors, and other members of Dinkins' staff. The Mayor himself would talk only to those who had serious proposals. At the end of the open house, City Hall announced that twenty-two hundred New Yorkers had come down to give advice. However, only about a thousand stayed long enough to fill out forms and talk to Dinkins or his staff about their ideas. One pair of visitors brought along an eleven-foot python. A man came dressed as Santa Claus and a woman as the Easter Bunny. (This was, after all, New York.) The proposals the visitors brought with them included ideas about how the Dinkins administration could spread warnings about AIDS, house the homeless, make children happy (by putting on an International Children's Festival), and encourage less affluent New Yorkers to concern themselves with the financial affairs of their city (by selling municipal bonds in two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar denominations). Quite a few of the ideas had been around for a while—some for

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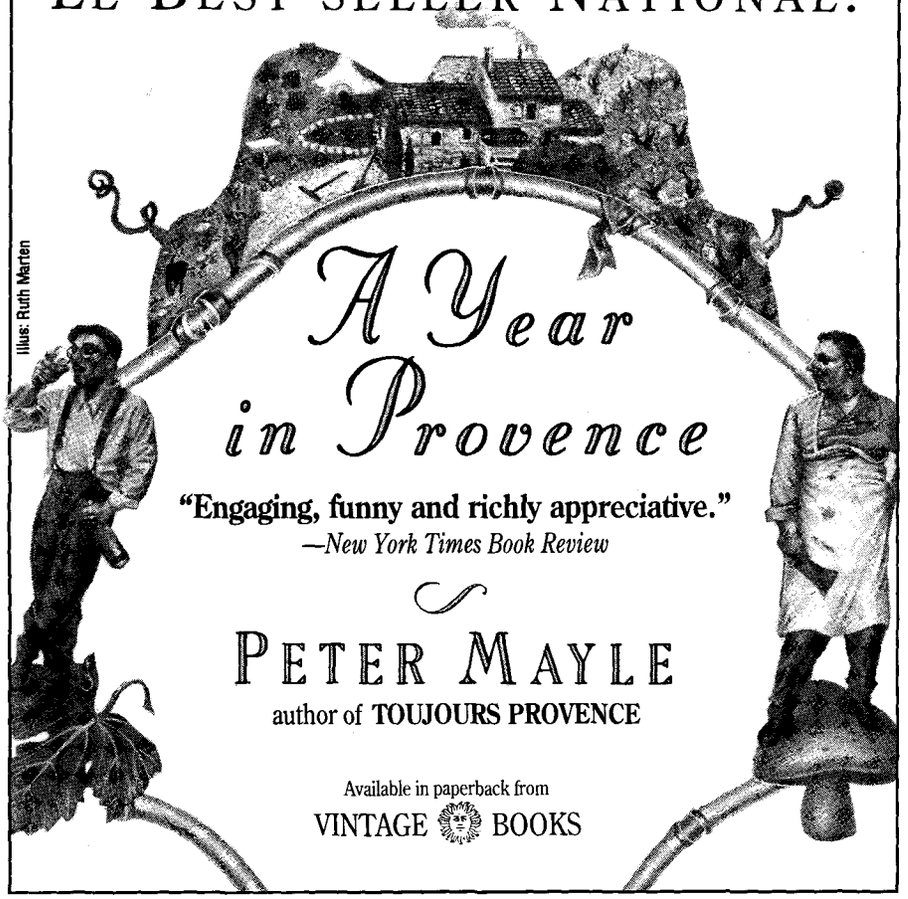

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generations—but the visitors were clearly happy to have a chance to pass them along. Dinkins, wearing a shiny baseball jacket, talked to about fifty of the visitors. It was clear that not all of them made it inside his office just because of their plans for improving city government. A seven-year-old boy was interested in why Justice Thurgood Marshall was retiring from the United States Supreme Court. An eleven-year-old girl named Takeenya Bryant proposed to the Mayor that he allow local residents to buy garbage bags for a quarter from the Sanitation Department and get fifty cents back when they returned them filled. "It warranted my concern simply because it came from an eleven-year-old girl," Dinkins said of that idea.

Though nothing might come of any of the suggestions, the open house got generally favorable reviews, possibly because the weather was fine, the photographs were cheery, and so many New Yorkers were hungry for good news out of City Hall. The *Times* was especially commendatory about the day's helpfulness in giving ordinary citizens a sense of "connecting" with their government leaders. The Mayor announced that he and his deputy mayors and commissioners and the rest of his staff might well throw another open house soon. There is hope in some quarters, of course, that open houses won't come to be thought of as a substitute for governing. To the surprise of quite a few people, one of the harshest reviews of the occasion appeared on the editorial page of the black-owned Brooklyn paper the *City Sun*. Under the heading "Goofball Government: Dinkins at the Helm," it began, "Pardon us for asking, but isn't Dave Dinkins the mayor of this town? With what was going on at City Hall on Monday, we thought perhaps he was seriously considering a career change. Consensus taker? Pollster?. . . Dinkins suddenly decided he would like to get in touch with New York. . . . The dear, good mayor is confused: You don't first 'solve' a problem and then ask people to help you 'solve' what you already have 'solved.'. . . What this town needs is a decisive mayor who knows what leadership is." Meanwhile, the editorial concluded, the Dinkins administration "marks time as the transition government between Koch and somebody probably very much like him."

—ANDY LOGAN

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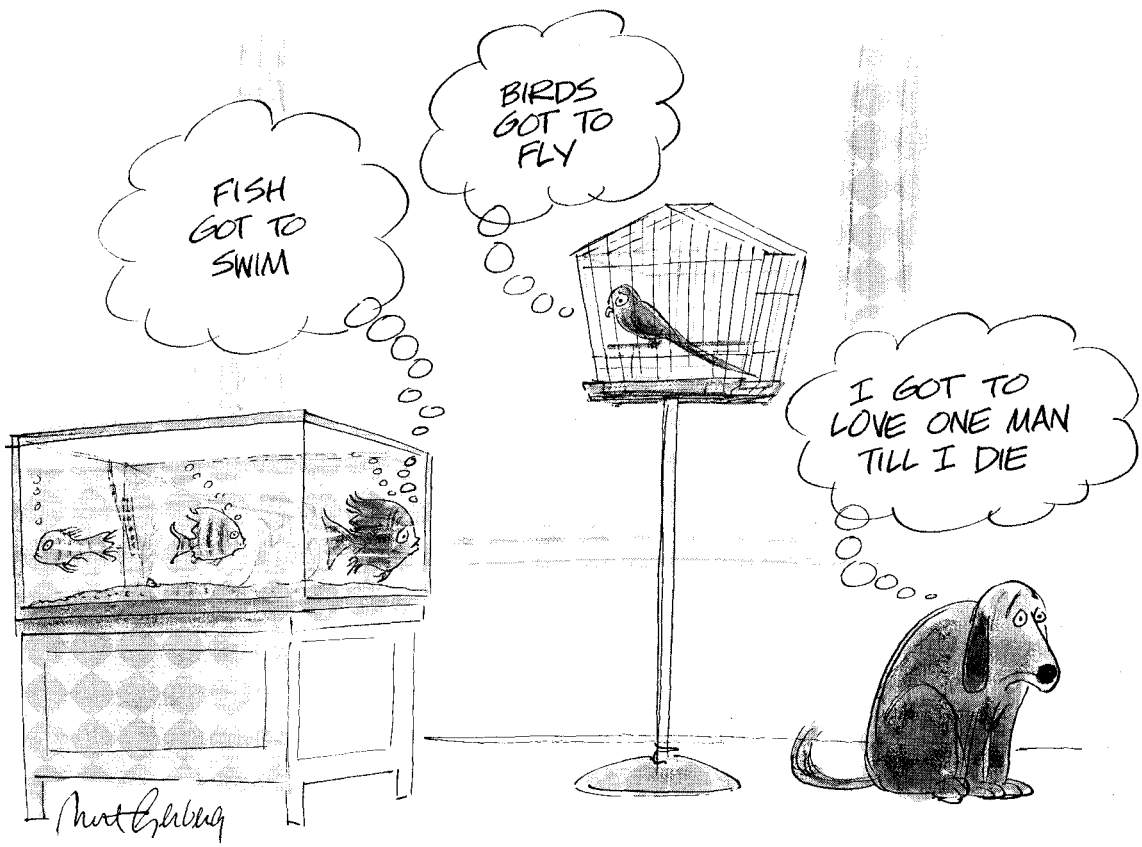
BOOKS

Eyeball to Eyeball

Michael Beschloss's "The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1963" (HarperCollins; $29.95) explores two men's responsibility for a series of confrontations that threatened a third world war. It's a diplomatic history that's searching, scholarly, and, above all, dramatic: Beschloss, a young American historian, revives the suspense of a four-year period when no one knew whether Soviet-American quarrels about the civil war in the Congo or over a successor to Dag Hammarskjöld at the United Nations would break up the U.N. or whether our quarrels over the status of Berlin would end in battle. Khrushchev repeatedly insisted that he would sign a separate peace treaty with East Germany, abrogating the Potsdam agreements and, with them, the Western powers' rights of access to and occupation in West Berlin. Instead, in August, 1961, he allowed the East Germans to build the Wall. The Cuban missile crisis, of October, 1962, brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. Though negotiations that concluded a less than wholly effective agreement to neutralize Laos in June, 1962, and a limited test-ban treaty in August, 1963, demonstrated that Russians and Americans could agree, moments of good will never became an era of good feeling, and the nuclear mini-détente led not to further disarmament but to a renewed arms race.

Mr. Beschloss starts his tale shortly before McGeorge Bundy, President John F. Kennedy's national-security adviser, told the President that C.I.A. analysts were certain that aerial photographs showed that missiles the Soviets were installing in Cuba were designed to launch nuclear warheads at the United States. The President's first reaction, Beschloss reports, was that Khrushchev "can't do this to me," and the book proceeds to explain exactly why Chairman Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev thought he could. (Khrushchev had two jobs: Chairman of the Council of Ministers and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.) The reason was that neither man ever grasped the other's problems or motivation. I can't count the number of times that Beschloss writes something like "There is little evidence that Kennedy devoted much thought to the effect of this speech [his first State of the Union Address] on the Soviets," or, of Khrushchev, "With his eternal assumption that American leaders were telepathic enough to read his mind, he probably thought that Kennedy knew his Wars of Liberation speech had been delivered mainly for Chinese consumption." They did not know when to heed each other's oratory and when to dismiss it, or whether a warlike gesture—our program to increase conventional forces, announced in July of 1961, or the Russians' resumption of nuclear testing that September—was a step toward a shooting war or a tactic in a war of nerves. We had no way of knowing that, although Khrushchev presented himself to the world as an autocrat, his actions were constrained by opposition at home and by China's militant dissent within the Communist bloc. On the other hand, our open society's openness confused the Russians. Khrushchev assumed that any newspaper column or senator's speech must represent a policy of the American government; the notion that Americans could say or print whatever they chose eluded him.

Mr. Beschloss threads his way through these collisions with quiet brilliance. His solid construction solves every problem of narration and exposition, and he handles encyclopedic detail and constant shifts of time and scene without apparent effort. He has a mass of new material from the Russian side, as a result of *glasnost*, and even more from this country, where the passage of time has opened many archives. The new information does more than add trimmings to history; some of it changes our fundamental readings of events and our assessments of the



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actors. Khrushchev used several obscure Russians for back-channel communication, and their testimony affects our view of Soviet intentions; on our side, transcripts of previously secret White House tape recordings reveal the inaccuracy of memoirists who we thought had given us factual firsthand reports. Mr. Beschloss, besides supplying extensive accounts of his leading figures' careers and personalities, provides each member of his immense cast with a capsule biography, so that the reader gets an idea of the variety and the quality of the men who served or advised the President and the Chairman. The author conveys simultaneity by crosscutting when crises overlap, or when, as in the Cuban missile crisis, the minutes tick away toward a deadline—we were preparing an air strike to take out the missiles before they became operational—while diplomatic exchanges, beset by snags and hitches, prepare a settlement: Russian withdrawal in exchange for our public pledge not to invade Cuba and for our secret promise to withdraw obsolescent missiles from Turkey at a later date. Sometimes the crosscuts are a few paragraphs long, sometimes several pages. This cinematic technique can be irritating in prose. It isn't here, because the author never employs it to exaggerate a reality that's melodramatic enough.

Mr. Beschloss tells us that Khrushchev wanted Kennedy to win the election in 1960. Khrushchev thought that the younger man would be influenced by older Democrats who favored easing Cold War hostilities by negotiation, and he tried to help Kennedy's cause by delaying the release of American RB-47 pilots until after his Inauguration. In an earlier book, "Mayday: Eisenhower, Khrushchev and the U-2 Affair," Beschloss stated that the American reconnaissance plane wasn't flying in Soviet airspace when the Russians shot it down on July 1, 1960; nonetheless, they had the airmen, and Khrushchev's timing insured that the Eisenhower-Nixon Administration got no credit for freeing them. Khrushchev was angered when the young President, influenced by older Republicans, embarked on the invasion of Cuba that failed at the Bay of Pigs, but the failure also persuaded him that Kennedy was indecisive as well as inexperienced, and could be bullied.

Khrushchev's historical ranking has gone up a few points in the *glasnost* years, because we've learned more about his side of the story, and because Russians are now free to discuss the failures of Leonid Brezhnev, who led the conspiracy to oust him, and who succeeded him as First Secretary in 1964. I suspect, though, that when *glasnost* has made all of modern Soviet history available our sympathy will go out to the anti-Khrushchev conspirators. The man was intolerable. Beschloss is as fair as he can be, and gives Khrushchev credit for seeing that the Soviet Union needed to decrease military spending, improve agriculture, and invest in consumer goods. But Khrushchev remained a true believer, and couldn't relinquish the dream of Communism conquering the world. He couldn't frankly choose butter over guns; instead, he tried to conceal military inferiority by a policy of bluster and bluff. "The Chairman felt he must take audacious gambles if he was to advance the Soviet cause without bankrupting the economy with vast military spending," Beschloss writes. He rushed the Soviet space program (causing the death of the first Soviet astronaut), in order to convince the world that he commanded a formidable force of military rockets. He frightened the West, as he hoped, but fear brought opposition, not acquiescence: NATO closed ranks, and NATO members increased their arms budgets. He didn't learn from his mistakes but retained "almost unlimited faith in his own superior wiliness and nerve," Beschloss comments, and describes him as having the confidence of a self-made man and also an upstart's touchiness. He imagined snubs and insults; he was infuriated whenever Kennedy warned that war might start by miscalculation, as if the President intended a reflection on his sagacity.

I think the author is slightly unjust in blaming Kennedy for not understanding the pressures on Khrushchev. At moments, Khrushchev's relentless cocksureness reminded me (and the President) of Kennedy's father, the irrepressibly aggressive and demanding Joseph P. Kennedy—but Khrushchev was a caricature of the old man at his worst. His boorishness was distracting, and his policies were so irresponsible that they defied understanding. Bundy called his Cuban missile project "crazy," and it was. Khrushchev knew that our U-2s were observing Cuba and Russian shipments to Cuba, and yet he assumed that he could transport forty nuclear warheads and build bases for them without detection.

Kennedy keeps looking worse as new sources become available. Beschloss can now document what used to be gossip. He thinks that the President's sexual promiscuity made him vulnerable to blackmail, and that he kept J. Edgar Hoover on at the F.B.I. because the Bureau had collected evidence of his affairs. And Beschloss can now write with assurance about the President's assorted medications and his dependence on Dr. Feelgood injections—mostly amphetamines—administered by Dr. Max Jacobson. The author thinks, though, that in the end the drugs didn't hurt Kennedy's performance as President.

However, Beschloss does report, without emphasis, a quality in Kennedy and his Administration which I find disturbing, and which I think affected our foreign policy for the worse—vindictiveness. Administration memoirs and oral histories—the book's source material—are full of belittling accounts, sometimes vulgar, sometimes snide, of men whom the President and his brother Robert, the Attorney General, didn't like, disagreed with, saw as critics, or regarded as rivals, even as defeated rivals. The Kennedys' own maliciousness is echoed in remarks that members of President Kennedy's staff have made over the years about each other. The Kennedy Administration gives the impression of a collection of embattled selves lacking in generosity or perspective. Grudges never end; the decision is never final; the Kennedys keep punching after the bell.

This vindictiveness characterized our approach to Cuba. Castro's megalomaniac ambitions required our enmity; he thought that in order to be regarded as a hero he had to appear to defy American might. There was no reason for the President to take Castro's nonsense personally, but he did. He didn't plan a second invasion of Cuba, but he

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sponsored a relentless covert guerrilla war that included schemes to assassinate Castro, and non-stop sabotage, raids, and assaults on that hapless island. These secret attacks confused Castro—he thought they were preludes to, rather than substitutes for, an invasion—and helped persuade him to accept Khrushchev's offer of nuclear missiles.

Of all the figures of that era, the one whose reputation among historians has improved most is Eisenhower. Beschloss reminds us that Eisenhower knew that Khrushchev's missile forces were inferior to ours but never said so out loud, because he didn't want to let the Russians know what we knew, and he didn't want to humiliate Khrushchev and impel the Russians to increase their military spending (as they did after their humiliating retreat from Cuba). However, Beschloss admits that Eisenhower's prestige made his nonspecific assurances of our military adequacy acceptable to American voters, and that Kennedy, without Eisenhower's credentials, had to be much more candid in telling Americans—especially Republicans—how strong we really were. Whenever he did, Khrushchev was infuriated, probably because he was even weaker than we suspected. It appears that the Soviet Union had only twenty intercontinental ballistic missiles in 1962, while our estimate was thirty-five to fifty.

It's surprising, though, that Beschloss uses Eisenhower as a stick to beat Kennedy, since in "Mayday" he recounted how Eisenhower, too, failed to reach an understanding with Khrushchev. I'm not doubting Eisenhower's patience, judgment, or steadiness; I am questioning the implicit endorsement of Eisenhower's Father-knows-best conduct of foreign policy. Beschloss, accurately enough, sees the history of the years 1960-63 as the acting out of the passions and calculations of two men; but it would be an exaggeration, I think, to blame the monarchization of our Presidency and Americans' acceptance of an attenuated role, a lessening of citizens' rights and duties in government, only on the Cold War. As long ago as 1942, in "Conditions of Peace," the English historian E. H. Carr noted that "the most important constitutional development of recent years in almost every country has been the growth in the power of the executive." He saw that development paralleled in Fascism and parliamentary democracy, attributed it to the need to manage the economy, and assumed, with complacency, that it would continue in the postwar world. It has, but it hasn't really worked well enough for us to be complacent about it. We're always better off governing ourselves instead of being governed, acting as informed participants rather than as trusting foot soldiers. At least, that's the closest I come to finding a lesson in this account of a time when our lives depended on two men who weren't quite up to their jobs. —Naomi Bliven

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

Isaac and His Devils, by Fernanda Eberstadt (Knopf; $22). A book as precocious, overweight, and exuberant as its protagonist, a brilliant boy named Isaac Hooker, who seems barely contained by his quiet home town of Gilboa, New Hampshire. Isaac bounds through the kind of prize-winning, socially awkward youth that is typical of overgifted children: he is adored by his father, a high-school teacher who never lived up to his own academic promise, scorned by his anti-intellectual mother, and alternately revered and despised by his smart but silent younger brother. The book's chronology is loopy, and sometimes difficult: we are dropped into new situations in Isaac's life—at one point, we suddenly find him blissfully shacked up with the old-maid math teacher who encouraged him to apply to Harvard—and only afterward whisked back in time and briefed on the explanatory history. But this one-step-forward, two-steps-back approach to storytelling keeps us on the edge of our seats, and our sustained interest is a testament to the author's energetic mind, which is as tangible and compelling as Isaac's. In fact, Ms. Eberstadt is at her most engaging when she flirts with the viewpoints of supporting characters, perhaps because observers of genius are easier to take than the crowing subject himself.

GENERAL

Fortunate Son, by Lewis B. Puller, Jr. (Grove Weidenfeld; $21.95). The author is the son of Lewis (Chesty) Puller, a highly decorated

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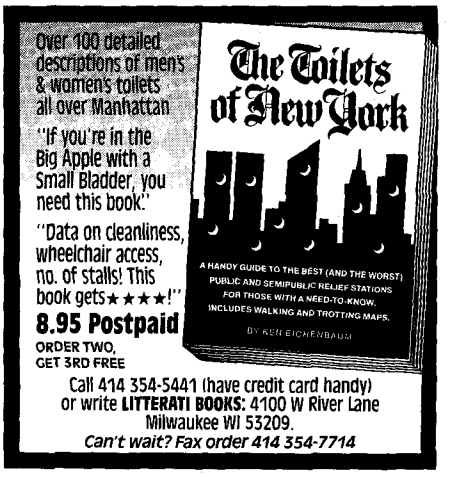
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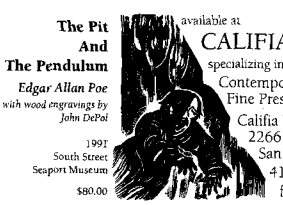

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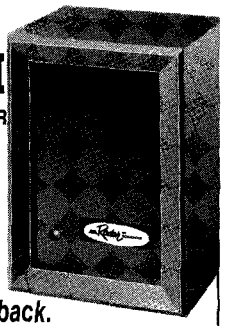

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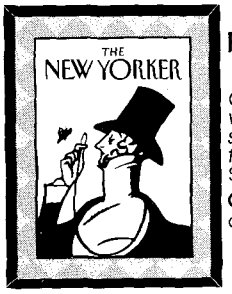

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and famous marine, and his autobiography is in part a meditation on his relationship to authority, both paternal and patrial. Lewis, Jr.,'s military childhood ended in his inevitable enlistment in the Corps and a tour of duty in Vietnam, nearly every day of which he recounts in almost unbearably gripping detail. He returned home with no legs and missing several fingers, but he is utterly unsentimental in his description of his rehabilitation and the perseverance of his wife, who gave birth to their first child while he was still in the hospital. Any sense of "before" and "after" is due not to his newly limited physical capacities but to his much altered attitude toward the nation's military policy and the Marine Corps he was raised to love. Mr. Puller went on to become a lawyer and run for Congress, then nearly drank himself to death before he dried out and wrote this curative book. As much as any other chapter in his story, this reminds us that to be a hero means no more and no less than to be human, and willing to work at it.

William Henry Seward: Lincoln's Right Hand, by John M. Taylor (HarperCollins; $25). William Henry Seward was the product of a formidable political machine, and with the backing of the machine's boss, Thurlow Weed, he was propelled into the New York governor's chair in 1839 and to Washington as a senator a decade later. As an outspoken opponent of the "slave power" in the Senate, and with Weed's backing, Seward was expected to be the Republican Presidential nominee in 1860, but Abraham Lincoln's forces outmaneuvered Seward and Weed at the convention in Chicago. Upon election, Lincoln asked Seward to serve as his Secretary of State, a position he held until 1869. Seward performed ably, protecting the Union's diplomatic flanks against European intervention in favor of the Confederacy, and acquiring Alaska—Seward's Folly—from Russia in 1867, for two cents an acre. Mr. Taylor does a workmanlike job of chronicling Seward's career, but his portrait is so forgiving of his subject's flaws as to conceal them. Seward's vaulting egotism and his condescending treatment of the new President are cast in the most favorable possible light, and where many of Seward's contemporaries saw unprincipled expediency Mr. Taylor sees pragmatism. He clearly feels that recent treatment of Seward has been too harsh, but his own efforts to explain the sources of Seward's conduct read like excuses.

Joachim Gasquet's Cézanne: A Memoir with Conversations, translated from the French by Christopher Pemberton (Thames & Hudson; $29.95). Joachim Gasquet was a poet, whose father, a baker in Aix-en-Provence, had gone to school with Cézanne, and introduced his son to the painter in 1896. Cézanne was jealous of his solitude and impatient with anything that might interfere with his devotion to his work, but he took a shine to the young man, in whom he saw the disciple he had never, to his regret, had. The two took long walks in Aix, and in Paris went together to the Louvre, where Cézanne expounded his ideas on art and artists. After Cézanne died, in 1906, Gasquet reconstructed and consolidated these discourses in his own rather florid and overcharged idiom and, in 1921, published them in a book; this is the first English translation of it. Although he called the conversations "imaginary," he is believed to have preserved the essence of Cézanne's thought, and they bear out the adage that the best art critics are artists. Gasquet wrote a brief biography to go with the conversations, which describes Cézanne's youthful struggles in Aix and Paris. Many illustrations.

•

Hanging Baskets
•Begonia •Impatiens •Petunias
•Assorted Jews
—Adv. in the Tulsa World.

They don't have enough troubles?

•

Auditions for the High School production of "The Music Man" were completed last week, according to music teacher Dan Prior. "We had over 100 students try out for the parts," said Prior. "That's more than ever before."

"The Music Man" is a romantic comedy that combines music, dance and well-known numbers like "76 Strong Bones" and "Goodnight My Someone."—*Fairfield (Ohio) Echo.*

Sounds like trouble right there in River City.

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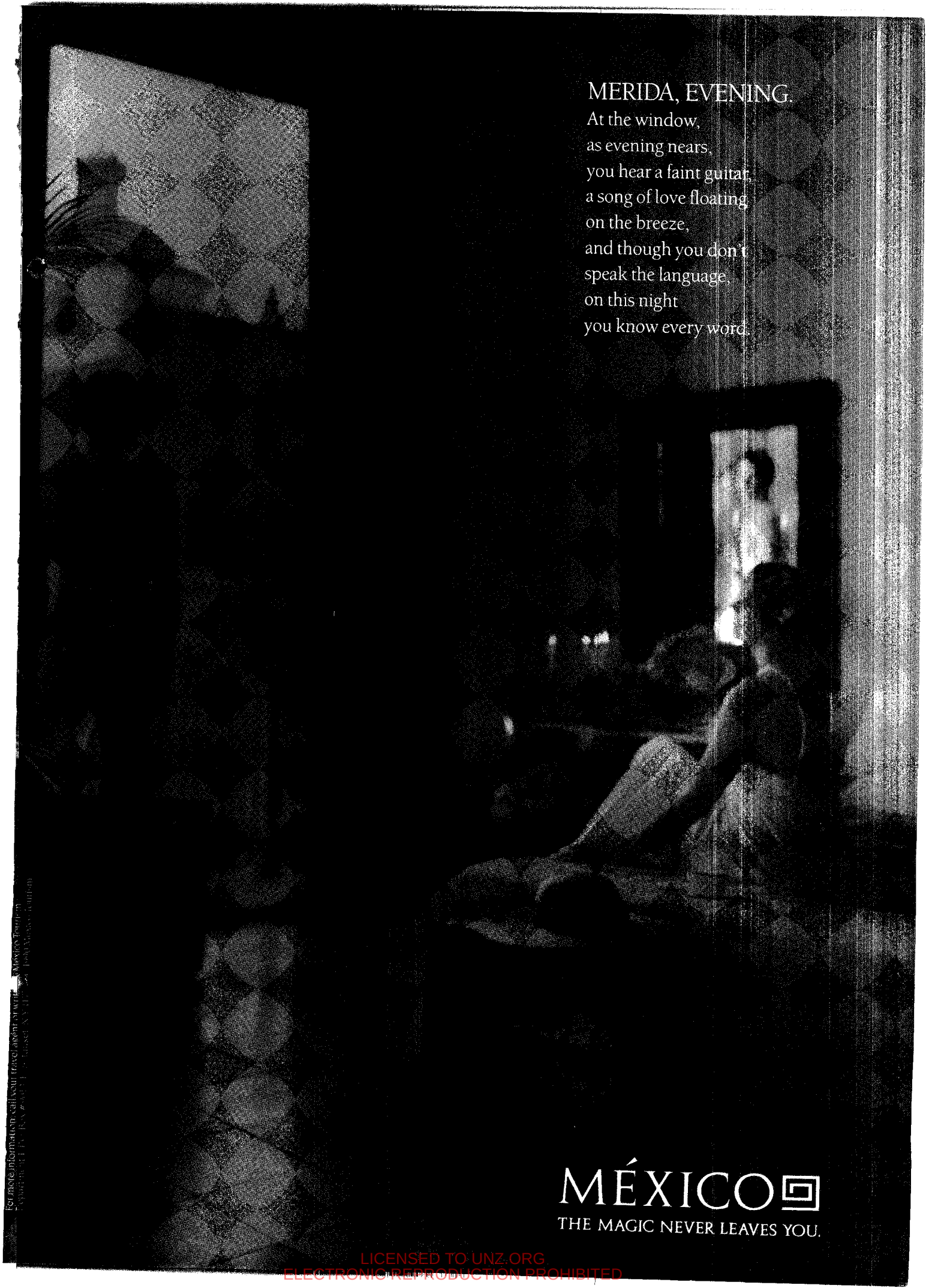

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or aloof is to misread him.

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